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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[ON THE TRAIL OF THE TRUTH.]

A PLAIN GIRL.

—30—

CHAPTER XX.

My mother was buried in the family graveyard of Clonallon—a graveyard surrounding a little ruined church on the side of a sunny hill, about a mile from the west entrance to the castle.

I often slipped away alone whilst my cousins were in the garden or the dairy, and sat an hour beside a mound, just below the eastern window, that had a plain, grey slab above it, and on that slab nothing whatever but the name "Ellen"—not Ellen, the beloved wife, nor Ellen Dennis, or Ellen Deane, merely the Christian name—and no date.

I did not go there to cry. I went there to sit and think. I would sit for an hour at a time in the late afternoon sun, looking down at the far-spreading heathered-coloured or brown, boggy plains below, on a grey, straight road that led across it in a slanting direction to Boskell, whose two spires and pile of barracks were well within view, and away beyond

Boskell to where the Vann crept along, a dark, sluggish river, with a dead stream, to that part of the country I had not explored yet, but would, and soon—that dismal scene of Mr. Sims's murder.

Not a word of my plans did I breathe to human ear, and I only thought of them steadily and seriously on these occasions, when I could slip away and be alone.

The whole story of the murder, in a series of yellow, old newspapers, was locked up in uncle's private bureau.

He would not allow me to see it, for I had asked for it, indirectly, through Jane and Aunt Julia.

I wanted to hear a great deal more—I wanted to piece different things together, and I had not the courage to boldly ask people to repeat that dreadful narrative to me over and over again.

I would go very soon, and alone, in my market dress to the scene of this terrible event.

I would ask questions there, and in that disguise, that I dared not put in my own character as Miss Dennis.

This was a Monday; I would get up early the next day, say at six, and start off, on foot. I was a good walker, and trusted to chance for getting lifts on asses' cars as I went along; but I must have some ostensible errand, and I sat puzzling my brains over what that errand was to be.

As I sat with my eyes bent upon the ground, my arms encircling my knees, and my hat lying beside me on the grass, I was aware of someone getting over the low stone wall to my right. Never had my solitude been disturbed before, and I glanced up quickly, and saw my friend in the goggles coming over the graves towards me.

"Fine evening, miss?" touching his hat.

"Very fine," I answered, shortly.

I was not going to enter into conversation with him if I could help it. I wished he would go away.

"I saw you at the sports on Saturday."

"Yes."

"Do you often come up here?"

"No."

"I suppose," speaking with considerable hesitation, "that you know all about your

father now? They have told you—they have—"

He stopped, and then stammered on,—

"And what do you think of it?—of of—"

"I think he never did it," I answered, standing up as I spoke. "I think as she did," laying my hand on the grey stone beside me.

To my unutterable amazement, the crazy stone-breaker went down on his knees in the moss, and then half-throwing himself across the grave, broke out into sobs and tears.

As he buried his face in his hands, and remained thus for fully five minutes, I picked up my hat and turned once more to look at him.

Certainly the poor man was exceedingly mad, and I did not feel comfortable being with him all by myself in this very lonely place, within sound of nothing but the sheep, the curlew, and the grouse.

"Don't go," he said, putting out an arm, and catching me tightly by the dress, "I have something to say to you—here."

"Let me go, if you please," I answered, nervously, "and whatever you have to say be quick about it, for they are expecting me at home, and will be coming to look for me."

I put this in as a kind of protection to myself.

He relinquished his grasp of my dress, rose, and took off his goggles, and displayed a strikingly good sane face; but, oh! such a strangely sad one!

His forehead was scored, and ruled with lines, his hair was grey, his eyes were sunken, and yet there was something in the brightness of those sunken eyes that belied the appearance of age; and more than this, the man before me, despite his tail-matted hands and worn, patched clothes, was, or had once been, a gentleman.

I saw it in an instant when he pushed his hat back and looked at me with his searching straight-browed eyes—eyes that seemed familiar to me in some odd way.

"You are amazed at my assurance, I can see?"

I gasped now, indeed, with some surprise. What had become of his brogue?

"But I knew your father and mother well."

He paused a second, as if something was choking him, and then went on,—

"Nay, I cannot dissimulate—I never could. I know that you are a brave girl, Ellen. You can stand a shock. You must know it some time, why not now? Oh! I must tell you, for I can hold my tongue no longer. Your father is alive!"

I trembled all over from head to foot. I knew what he was about to tell me. I felt as cold as a stone. My heart was fluttering in my throat, but I managed to articulate, and I said, as I steadied myself by the grave-stone,—

"And you are my father?"

"You have guessed it," he said. "I did not die after all, and I am glad of it, for your sake. It was No. 4,725 that died, not 4,724; but a little mistake like that makes no difference in returns. Who cares what happens to a *lifer*? The only one who would have cared lies there!" pointing to the grave. "I am out now on ticket-of-leave. What do you think of your father?" removing his hat, and passing his hand through his very thick but very grizzled locks. "I am known here as Tom Kirby, the stone-breaker—I'm a good hand at that; practice makes perfect. Would anyone guess, to look at me, an elderly, broken, bent ticket-of-leave, that I am only forty-three years old, and years younger than that old rascal my mother wanted to marry you to. I know all about it—I know a good deal; that I was once one of the smartest men in the smartest cavalry regiment in the service—that for a year I was as happy a human being as drew breath nineteen years ago, and what years those nineteen have been! Is there justice in Heaven, I ask?" he said, looking at me, fiercely.

"For nineteen years I have suffered a living

death for the sake of one who walks among his fellow-men, holding his head high—who is looked up to; who has prospered; who has never been found out; who was my enemy I know, because she was my wife, and who swore, and kept his oath, to ruin me. Thanks to my temper, my folly—thanks to circumstantial evidence—I escaped the rope, but by a miracle!"

He paused, breathless, and stood staring at me. Then he went on again,—

"Sometimes I think you are your mother, Ellen. No two people were ever so much alike. I cannot realise that you, a young woman of nineteen, are my daughter—my daughter," he repeated, in a lower tone.

"But you soon will, father, and it will come easy to me to believe that you are my father—the man they call Mad Kelly. I will be a real daughter to you, for I shall never rest, night or day, till I can prove your innocence."

"You never could—never. Proofs were too strong, though I am as innocent as you are."

"Never mind, I will do my best. You know the fable of the mouse and the lion. I will be the mouse. The first thing is for you to tell me the whole story. The next thing will be for me to go to the place. I shall look about for proofs. I believe I shall succeed."

"After nineteen years!" he said, incredulously. "I have looked myself, and looked like a fool, knowing that they could never be discovered, but hope springs eternal in the human breast."

"I am a very good finder, and I shall look when I know the exact locality, and I'll go into the hovels around."

"Ah, that's more than I dare do, with all my goggles and my brogue. There are two things that never were found—the memorandum book and the button. I firmly believe that that button was one of Kate's sleeve-studs. I remember that night when I met him running up the stairs before *me*, noticing that his shirt cuff was open. He always wore a pair of queer Indian gold ones, lozenge-shaped. Next day he had on a pair I never saw before. When one's mind has a suspicious idea one takes in these things."

"And did you never put this in evidence against him?"

"I? No, never. I was the culprit—every suspicion fell upon me. Was it not my gun? had he not been out with me alone? All were convinced that I was the guilty party; and he, the black-hearted scoundrel, gave every suspicion an edge with whispers, and hints, and suggestions, and pretended regrets. Not a breath of suspicion overtook his way, and yet he had more reason to commit the crime than anyone. He was drowned in debt, he had lost large sums to him, and there is reason—at least I have reason—to suppose that he actually forged his name."

"Tell me all about it from first to last," I said. "Tell me everything—the sooner I know the sooner I can begin to set to work!" I cried, with unusual eagerness.

"No such hurry as all that, Ellen. A few days more or less after all these years won't signify. As for myself I am now hardened and callous. I have lost her; I have lost my name, my youth, my friends, my career, my fortune. What could ever give them back to me? What have I left?"

"You have me," I said, quickly.

"A stranger! a stranger!"

"Don't say that, father. How can I be a stranger to you when you say that I have my mother's face?"

He covered his hands and groaned.

"Only for you, Ellen, I would give up the struggle, even for the chance of bringing him to justice. But I would like to leave you with a spotless name, to see you the wife of some honest fellow, such as that Karslake."

"Don't!" I cried, "don't name him. I told him there was a reason that I never, never could marry."

"You would be a fool to let it stand in your way, and no doubt he knows all. Married to him, and under the protection of his name,

and supplied with his money you could prosecute your plans for my rehabilitation with every chance of success."

"Then you would have me sell myself!" I cried out, passionately, horrified at such a proposition.

"Nay, for you love him! And listen, all the money would be but borrowed. Do you not know that you are your grandmother's heiress? She cannot (or be sure she would) leave away one penny from me. I am legally dead—and you take my place. You will be a very wealthy woman some day. My schemes may seem selfish; but, in truth, to leave my daughter the legacy of a clear name is all I care for now," picking up and replacing his hat as he spoke.

"And now, Nellie, the sun is quite low. Look at it sinking there, in a ball of fire beyond the bay! It seems to me as if it was bathing the very place in a crimson flood! It is too late for you to be out alone. By-the-way, you wounded that fellow badly in the leg. He won't be able to stir for three months—and I'm sorry you did not hit more of them. It's too late, as I say, to-night. Come here again if you can get away, on Wednesday evening, and I'll be here. In fact, I'll wait here on chance every evening this week till I see you again, and then when we next meet you shall hear everything—the real truth, and nothing but the truth."

So saying, my newly-found father having helped me over the low stone wall, laid his hands on my shoulders and looked hard into my face for some seconds, and then he stooped down and kissed me—and, waving me away with a gesture of his arm, turned and hurried down the hill.

I watched him—watched him closely, till he became a smaller and smaller object in the distance, and finally vanished among the furs.

Could that shabby, grey figure be my nearest relation in the world?—that man known as "Tom, the stone-breaker," and who really was a "ticket-of-leave-man, Number 4724,"—be my father, Philip Deane? I stood for some time trying to realise this fact, and bring it well home to my mind; and then, feeling the white dews of evening falling on my thin dress I, too, hurried home up the hill, and away over its brow to the Castle, and was much rallied during the evening on my strange pre-occupation and unusual gravity.

CHAPTER XII.

On Wednesday, at four o'clock, I was true to the tryst. I was first. I sat on the wall and watched him coming up the hill. He had, at my rate, the step of a young man still. He did not shake hands with me or kiss me, but said, as he joined me,—

"Come over to the other side of the churchyard. I won't tell you what I have to say near your mother's grave. Not, indeed that she can hear us, but it killed her. Come over to this side, where we can see the place," he said, taking me by the arm with a tight grip, and leading to the further wall.

"Do you see that bit of the Varn beyond Boskell, where the light is shining on it? Well, we parted a mile above that; and he must have crossed that dip in the bog that you see—or rather he meant to have crossed it, but never did so. It was a short cut to the high road. And now sit down, and I will lose no more time, but begin at the beginning. You won't mind my lighting my pipe, will you?" producing a short clay one—"a whiff or two now and then soothes me. I was a lieutenant in the cavalry, as you know, an only son, and fairly well off. Who would think it to look at me now? I married your mother when I was twenty-three. She was out-and-out the prettiest girl in these parts, and I cut out a lot of fellows when I carried off Miss Bourke—among others my friend Kant. But why he could have dreamt of marrying, especially a girl without a penny, I cannot guess, for he was fearfully hard-up,

and always talking of 'pulling round with a heiress,' besides, he was very fond of grandees. But for all that, there is no doubt that he was madly in love with your mother, and that she could not bear the sight of him.

"She said he was like Mephistopheles, and that he had the evil eye. I believe she refused him three times. Women are far quicker in perception than men, I will say.

"I believed Kant to be a rattling good fellow. He was my senior by five years. No one would guess that now. He was clever; he had a caustic wit—a good eye for a horse, and played a first-rate game at billiards. He was as poor as a rat, and how he managed to live, in an expensive regiment like ours, was a miracle only known to himself.

"He gambled, he bet on races, and managed in some extraordinary way to keep his head above water. He always had a couple of good horses; was always well-dressed; drank champagne at mess, and had his rooms better furnished than any man in the regiment.

"Yet sometimes, when cash has been very tight, he has been compelled to borrow—specially from me. I felt rather honoured, like the young gaby that I was in those days—and these loans they often passed out of Kant's mind altogether. Sometimes he would remark, quite casually—'Oh, I say, old chap, I must have a settling-up with you one of these days;' and there it would end.

"He came to our house constantly; dined with us a couple of times a week, and your mother did her best to like him as my friend. Then we had a spell of very high play. A young cornet—poor Sim!—whose father was a soap-boiler, and rolling in money, set the fashion. I would be afraid to say how high the stakes were. Sim had extraordinary luck—the luck that sometimes goes with youth, ignorance, and rashness.

"Kant lost heavily; but it was a mere question of time, his recouping himself. He thought I knew. I was of a different opinion; and one night, I having been badly bitten myself, put in a word, as I saw the bets increasing. I got no thanks for my pains from either Kant or Sim—both had what I call the fever of play on them. I only got rough words in return for my advice, and left them playing alone in the ante-room; left them rather in a passion.

"However, my rage soon blew over. Next day Sim and I went duck-shooting. It was bitterly cold, a kind of drizzling icy rain beat in our faces, and we had poor sport.

"Very foolishly I took up the subject of the previous evening, and told Sim that if I were him I would hold hard, that there was likely to be an awful row sooner or later about such high play—that it would give the corps a bad name, and that very few purses were as long as his.

"At first he cut up rough; but after a little he told me that he must let Kant have his revenge. 'Poor beggar!' he said, 'I'm ashamed to have won so much. He owes me upwards of three thousand pounds! He would double the stakes—aye, and treble them, too; but it was all to no purpose, as it turned out.'

"Kant owes you three thousand over cards! I said, in a tone, no doubt, of horrified incredulity. 'Good Heavens! he will have to sell his commission to pay it.'

"I don't mean to say that he has not plenty of coin," said Sim, who was very sharp about money matters; 'I thought he was well off—only waiting for his rents. I backed a bill for him just as a matter of form the day before yesterday.'

"I was sorry to hear it, but I said nothing. Perhaps my face may have expressed more than I wished; for I could see that young Sim was putting two and two together in his mind, and waxing suspicious and uneasy. However, the cold and wet had penetrated his bones, and finding that I was not going to discuss Kant's money matters he said he would laze, as only one could row the punt,

and get home across the bog, as he was half frozen, and in case of a stray shot he took a gun—mine by mistake; and I pat him on the back, telling him that he had much better leave the gun where it was, and that I would be home before him. The last I saw of him he was walking, in a rather cramped fashion, towards a gateway, as if his legs were stiff; and as I pulled away down the river in the punt, he waved his hand to me and shouted something about telling them I was coming, and that was the last I heard or saw of him alive.

Here my father stopped for a moment, and puffed at his pipe in silence, and then taking out a handkerchief wiped his forehead slowly, and resumed,—

"I was home first, of course, and was rather surprised to see nothing of Sim, for I went up to barracks on my way to our house and left his gun in his room. On the stairs, coming down, I met Kant going up. He had a fevered, excited look, and seemed in a great hurry to get to his own quarters, passing me with a muttered,—

"Don't keep me, there's a good fellow, I'm wringing wet.' Next day no sign of Sim, nor the next, and people began to ask me very odd questions, and to look at me very strangely, and I understood it all; and really at times when the mesh of circumstances was weaving itself round me closer and closer every hour I could almost bring myself to imagine that I had done it. Then the body was found, and I was arrested, Kant being as virulent and as bitter against me and my crime as though he had been poor Sim's own brother.

"He went down, I heard, several times alone early in the morning and carefully searched the place inch by inch with his own hands for further proofs. I and you can understand that this was a blind, that he was searching for his sleeve link, and, perhaps, other matters that might betray him, and put him in my place.

"The time of the trial was to me a kind of horrid nightmare; the shame of it was the part that I remember more keenly than even the fear of death after these nineteen years. To see the sea of faces all turned towards mine, to feel that they all believed me guilty of the crime of murder—even my own counsel I am sure had the same opinion in his heart, and my mother had no doubt on the subject at all; only one believed in my innocence. I felt numbed, crushed, stupefied; even her death scarcely roused me.

"It were better she were dead and lying there than to live and be pointed at as the wife of Philip Deane, who murdered a brother officer in cold blood, who had robbed him (for a large sum of money Sim was known to have had in his pocket-book was missing), and who was putting in the rest of his life, not in Her Majesty's uniform, but in convict dress."

"How long have you been out?" I asked at last rather suddenly.

"Two years. Of course I am under police surveillance, but that is not known, and my grey hairs, and my goggles, and my trade are a good shelter. No one guesses who Tom Kelly really is. I tell them all I come from Cavan."

"I wonder what is the first thing to be done," I said.

"The first thing to be done is to visit the place and the four cabins in that part of the bog. Something may be found still. Another thing is to keep your own counsel—to no one must you ever mention me. When the matter is ripe—if ripe it ever is—I will employ a good detective; but we have not got to that yet."

"I now understand why Colonel Kant—for, of course, he is the same, the man in the 29th Hussars—nearly fainted when he saw me in the market."

"How—when? Tell me all about it!" said my father, eagerly. "When did he see you? How long ago?"

I told him of my day's marketing, and all my adventures as succinctly as I could.

"Ah!" he said, when I had finished, "that puts another card in our hand. He has never heard of your existence, and he takes you for an apparition; he takes you for your mother. Avoid seeing him again, or letting him hear of you. I may have occasion to send you with an errand to him some day, an errand that may be the hinge of all my hopes. I will let him think that you are a visitor from the world of spirits; he was always most superstitious. He will be utterly terror-stricken—he will confess, if confession is needed."

"What proofs have you that he did it?" I asked.

"His absence at the time. Though he protested that he walked in an opposite direction, no one saw him. But a figure, the figure of a man, was seen near the place by a little boy who went for turf. He said it was a tall man in white. That sounds nonsense. But we all know that Kant had a white waterproof coat. However, he came home without it, and, strange to say, he was never seen to wear it again. Then Kant owed him large sums of money, though no "I O U's" of his were ever found. I knew this, I alone. I mentioned the fatal circumstance to Kant a day or two after the tragedy, before suspicion so strongly seized upon me, and he became livid, and denied it flatly, assuring me that the debt was the other way. Nellie, something tells me that will not be silenced—that he did it, and that, yes, there is surely a Nemesis on his track; leaden-footed justice will overtake him yet. There is a queer old ruin not very far from the place; you and your cousins might make an excuse to go and see it, but it is eight good miles to it if it is a yard."

"No, that would not do," I said, shaking my head; "I will dress up as a girl selling flax, and you must take me to-morrow—yes, the sooner the better—and show me the very place, and the cabins near it."

"But how will you get there?"

"I'll get lifts, or you will ask for them for me, as we go along the road, and I will meet you at eight o'clock to-morrow at the west gate. I must tell Aunt Julia and the girls—no, not about you, but where I am going; indeed, now that I think of it, I will take the mule and car."

And I did. The next morning at eight o'clock sharp we were jolting along to Boskell, I in my garden dress, sun-bonnet, and a shawl, my father in his usual disguise.

Aunt Julia thought the expedition verged on madness, but, all the same, allowed me to go.

"It will do no good, child," she assured me, repeatedly, "and it only encourages a morbid state of mind."

Nevertheless, go I would, nothing should keep me; and the mule (cunning beast), knowing that he had a man to deal with, stepped out well, and actually we did the whole seven miles in less than three hours.

"Here is the way, the short cut that Kant took," said my father, suddenly drawing up at a black gate and getting off. "We will leave the mule here," proceeding to tie him to a post as he spoke.

"But supposing he is stolen?" I said.

"No fear of that, no more than that he will run away. Give him that bundle of hay, and come along, and make the most of our time."

We went first of all down a lane, with high banks on either side, called a "Boreen," then over some green flat pastures, where the path was black, showing the nature of the land, across one or two drains of bog boards, and then we were bound by the bog on either side. On the right it was cut away, and in use, with piles of turf in clamps; big deep square bog-holes full of water on the other; the bog, in its natural state, a wild range of long brownish grass and heather, with here and there a bunch of fuge.

There were some sportmen on the bog shooting grouse. I heard not a presenty I saw two coming rapid towards us, two men (officers), in grey tweed coats, with a brace of red setters at their heels. They were my old acquaintances, and I knew them at once. I

father now? They have told you—they have—"

He stopped, and then stammered on,—

"And what do you think of it?—of of—"

"I think he never did it," I answered, standing up as I spoke. "I think as she did," laying my hand on the grey stone beside me.

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"Tell me all about it from first to last," I said. "Tell me everything—the sooner I know the sooner I can begin to set to work!" I cried, with unusual eagerness.

"No such hurry as all that, Ellen. A few days more or less after all these years won't signify. As for myself I am now hardened and callous. I have lost her; I have lost my name, my youth, my friends, my career, my fortune. What could ever give them back to me? What have I left?"

"You have me," I said, quickly.

"A stranger! I a stranger!"

"Don't say that, father. How can I be a stranger to you when you say that I have my mother's face?"

He covered his hands and groaned.

"Only for you, Ellen, I would give up the struggle, even for the chance of bringing him to justice. But I would like to leave you with a spotless name, to see you the wife of some honest fellow, such as that Karslake."

"Don't!" I cried, "don't name him. I told him there was a reason that I never, never could marry."

"You would be a fool to let it stand in your way, and no doubt he knows all. Married to him, and under the protection of his name,

and supplied with his money you could prosecute your plans for my rehabilitation with every chance of success."

"Then you would have me sell myself!" I cried out, passionately, horrified at such a proposition.

"Nay, for you love him! And listen, all the money would be but borrowed. Do you not know that you are your grandmother's heiress? She cannot (or be sure she would) leave away one penny from me. I am legally dead—and you take my place. You will be a very wealthy woman some day. My schemes may seem selfish; but, in truth, to leave my daughter the legacy of a clear name is all I care for now," picking up and replacing his hat as he spoke.

"And now, Nellie, the sun is quite low. Look at it sinking there, in a ball of fire beyond the bay! It seems to me as if it was bathing the very place in a crimson flood! It is too late for you to be out alone. By-the-way, you wounded that fellow badly in the leg. He won't be able to stir for three months—and I'm sorry you did not his more of them. It's too late, as I say, to-night. Come here again if you can get away, on Wednesday evening, and I'll be here. In fact, I'll wait here on chance every evening this week till I see you again, and then when we next meet you shall hear everything—the real truth, and nothing but the truth."

So saying, my newly-found father having helped me over the low stone wall, laid his hands on my shoulders and looked hard into my face for some seconds, and then he stooped down and kissed me—and, waving me away with a gesture of his arm, turned and hurried down the hill.

I watched him—watched him closely, till he became a smaller and smaller object in the distance, and finally vanished among the fumes.

Could that shabby, grey figure be my nearest relation in the world?—that man known as "Tom, the stone-breaker," and who really was a "ticket-of-leave-man, Number 4724,"—be my father, Philip Deane? I stood for some time trying to realise this fact, and bring it well home to my mind; and then, feeling the white dews of evening falling on my thin dress I, too, hurried home up the hill, and away over its brow to the Castle, and was much rallied during the evening on my strange pre-occupation and unusual gravity.

CHAPTER XXII

On Wednesday, at four o'clock, I was true to the tryst. I was first. I sat on the wall and watched him coming up the hill. He had, at any rate, the step of a young man still. He did not shake hands with me or kiss me, but said, as he joined me,—

"Come over to the other side of the churchyard. I won't tell you what I have to say near your mother's grave. Not, indeed that she can hear us, but it killed her. Come over to this side, where we can see the place," he said, taking me by the arm with a tight grip, and leading to the further wall.

"Do you see that bit of the Vann beyond Boskell, where the light is shining on it? Well, we parted a mile above that; and he must have crossed that dip in the bog that you see—or rather he meant to have crossed it, but never did so. It was a short cut to the high road. And now sit down, and I will lose no more time, but begin at the beginning. You won't mind my lighting my pipe, will you?" producing a short clay one—"a whiff or two now and then soothes me. I was a lieutenant in the cavalry, as you know, an only son, and fairly well off. Who would think it to look at me now?—I married your mother when I was twenty-three. She was out-and-out the prettiest girl in these parts, and I cut out a lot of fellows when I carried off Miss Bourke—among others my friend Kant. But why he could have dreamt of marrying, especially a girl without a penny, I cannot guess, for he was fearfully hard-up,

and always talking of 'pulling round with a heiness'; besides, he was very fond of grandees. But for all that, there is no doubt that he was madly in love with your mother, and that she could not bear the sight of him.

"She said he was like Mephistopheles, and that he had the evil eye. I believe she refused him three times. Women are far quicker in perception than men, I will say.

"I believed Kant to be a rattling good fellow. He was my senior by five years. No one would guess that now. He was clever; he had a caustic wit—a good eye for a horse, and played a first-rate game at billiards. He was as poor as a rat, and how he managed to live, in an expensive regiment like ours, was a miracle only known to himself.

"He gambled, he bet on races, and managed in some extraordinary way to keep his head above water. He always had a couple of good horses; was always well-dressed; drank champagne at mess, and had his rooms better furnished than any man in the regiment.

"Yet sometimes, when cash has been very tight, he has been compelled to borrow—specially from me. I felt rather honoured, like the young gaby that I was in those days—and these loans they often passed out of Kant's mind altogether. Sometimes he would remark, quite casually—Oh, I say, old chap, I must have a settling-up with you one of these days; and there it would end.

"He came to our house constantly; dined with us a couple of times a week, and your mother did her best to like him as my friend. Then we had a spell of very high play. A young cornet—poor Sim!—whose father was a soap-boiler, and rolling in money, set the fashion. I would be afraid to say how high the stakes were. Sim had extraordinary luck—the luck that sometimes goes with youth, ignorance, and rashness.

"Kant lost heavily; but it was a mere question of time, his recouping himself. He thought I knew. I was of a different opinion; and one night, I having been badly bitten myself, put in a word, as I saw the bets increasing. I got no thanks for my pains from either Kant or Sim—both had what I call the fever of play on them. I only got rough words in return for my advice, and left them playing alone in the ante-room; left them rather in a passion.

"However, my rage soon blew over. Next day Sim and I went duck-shooting. It was bitterly cold, a kind of drizzling joy rain beat in our faces, and we had poor sport.

"Very foolishly I took up the subject of the previous evening, and told Sim that if I were him I would hold hard, that there was likely to be an awful row sooner or later about such high play—that it would give the corps a bad name, and that very few purses were as long as his.

"At first he cut up rough; but after a little he told me that he must let Kant have his revenge. 'Poor beggar!' he said, 'I'm ashamed to have won so much. He owes me upwards of three thousand pounds! He would double the stakes—aye, and treble them, too; but it was all to no purpose, as it turned out.'

"Kant owes you three thousand over cards! I said, in a tone, no doubt, of horrified incredulity. 'Good Heavens! he will have to sell his commission to pay it.'

"I don't mean to say that he has not plenty of coin," said Sim, who was very sharp about money matters; 'I thought he was well off—only waiting for his rents. I backed a bill for him just as a matter of form the day before yesterday.'

"I was sorry to hear it, but I said nothing. Perhaps my face may have expressed more than I wished; for I could see that young Sim was putting two and two together in his mind, and waxing suspicious and uneasy. However, the cold and wet had penetrated his bones, and finding that I was not going to discuss Kant's money matters he said he would laze, as only one could row the punt,

and get home across the bog, as he was half frozen, and in case of a stray shot he took a gun—mine by mistake; and I pat him on the back, telling him that he had much better leave the gun where it was, and that I would be home before him. The last I saw of him he was walking, in a rather cramped fashion, towards a gateway, as if his legs were stiff; and as I pulled away down the river in the punt, he waved his hand to me and shouted something about telling them I was coming, and that was the last I heard or saw of him alive."

Here my father stopped for a moment, and puffed at his pipe in silence, and then taking out a handkerchief wiped his forehead slowly, and resumed,—

"I was home first, of course, and was rather surprised to see nothing of Sim, for I went up to barracks on my way to our house and left his gun in his room. On the stairs, coming down, I met Kant going up. He had a fevered, excited look, and seemed in a great hurry to get to his own quarters, passing me with a muttered,—

"Don't keep me, there's a good fellow, I'm wringing wet.' Next day no sign of Sim, nor the next, and people began to ask me very odd questions, and to look at me very strangely, and I understood it all; and really at times when the mesh of circumstances was weaving itself round me closer and closer every hour I could almost bring myself to imagine that I had done it. Then the body was found, and I was arrested, Kant being as virulent and as bitter against me and my crime as though he had been poor Sim's own brother.

"He went down, I heard, several times alone early in the morning and carefully searched the place inch by inch with his own hands for further proofs. I and you can understand that this was a blind, that he was searching for his sleeve link, and, perhaps, other matters that might betray him, and put him in my place.

"The time of the trial was to me a kind of horrid nightmare; the shame of it was the part that I remember more keenly than even the fear of death after these nineteen years. To see the sea of faces all turned towards mine, to feel that they all believed me guilty of the crime of murder—even my own counsel I am sure had the same opinion in his heart, and my mother had no doubt on the subject at all; only one believed in my innocence. I felt numbed, crushed, stupefied; even her death scarcely roused me.

"It were better she were dead and lying there than to live and be pointed at as the wife of Philip Deane, who murdered a brother officer in cold blood, who had robbed him (for a large sum of money Sim was known to have had in his pocket-book was missing), and who was putting in the rest of his life, not in Her Majesty's uniform, but in convict dress."

"How long have you been out?" I asked at last rather suddenly.

"Two years. Of course I am under police surveillance, but that is not known, and my grey hairs, and my goggles, and my trade are a good shelter. No one guesses who Tom Kelly really is. I tell them all I come from Cavan."

"I wonder what is the first thing to be done," I said.

"The first thing to be done is to visit the place and the four cabins in that part of the bog. Something may be found still. Another thing is to keep your own counsel—to no one must you ever mention me. When the matter is ripe—if ripe it ever is—I will employ a good detective; but we have not got to that yet."

"I now understand why Colonel Kant—for, of course, he is the same, the man in the 29th Hussars—nearly fainted when he saw me in the market."

"How—when? Tell me all about it!" said my father, eagerly. "When did he see you? How long ago?"

I told him of my day's marketing, and all my adventures as succinctly as I could.

"Ah!" he said, when I had finished, "that puts another card in our hand. He has never heard of your existence, and he takes you for an apparition; he takes you for your mother. Avoid seeing him again, or letting him hear of you. I may have occasion to send you with an errand to him some day, an errand that may be the hinge of all my hopes. I will let him think that you are a visitor from the world of spirits; he was always most superstitious. He will be utterly terror-stricken—he will confess, if confession is needed."

"What proofs have you that he did it?" I asked.

"His absence at the time. Though he protested that he walked in an opposite direction, no one saw him. But a figure, the figure of a man, was seen near the place by a little boy who went for turf. He said it was a tall man in white. That sounds nonsense. But we all know that Kant had a white waterproof coat. However, he came home without it, and, strange to say, he was never seen to wear it again. Then Kant owed him large sums of money, though no "IO U's" of his were ever found. I knew this, I alone. I mentioned the fatal circumstance to Kant a day or two after the tragedy, before suspicion so strongly seized upon me, and he became livid, and denied it flatly, assuring me that the debt was the other way. Nellie, something tells me that will not be silenced—that he did it, and that, yes, there is surely a Nemesis on his track; leaden-footed justice will overtake him yet. There is a queer old ruin not very far from the place; you and your cousins might make an excuse to go and see it, but it is eight good miles to it if it is a yard."

"No, that would not do," I said, shaking my head; "I will dress up as a girl selling flax, and you must take me to-morrow—yes, the sooner the better—and show me the very place, and the cabins near it."

"But how will you get there?"

"I'll get lifts, or you will ask for them for me, as we go along the road, and I will meet you at eight o'clock to-morrow at the west gate. I must tell Aunt Julia and the girls—no, not about you, but where I am going; indeed, now that I think of it, I will take the mule and car."

And I did. The next morning at eight o'clock sharp we were jolting along to Boskell, I in my garden dress, sun-bonnet, and a shawl, my father in his usual disguise.

Aunt Julia thought the expedition verged on madness, but, all the same, allowed me to go.

"It will do no good, child," she assured me, repeatedly, "and it only encourages a morbid state of mind."

Nevertheless, go I would, nothing should keep me; and the mule (cunning beast), knowing that he had a man to deal with, stepped out well, and actually we did the whole seven miles in less than three hours.

"Here is the way, the short cut that Kant took," said my father, suddenly drawing up at a black gate and getting off. "We will leave the mule here," proceeding to tie him to a post as he spoke.

"But supposing he is stolen?" I said.

"No fear of that, no more than that he will run away. Give him that bundle of hay, and come along, and make the most of our time."

We went first of all down a lane, with high banks on either side, called a "Boreen," then over some green flat pastures, where the foot-path was black, showing the nature of the land, across one or two drains of water, on boards, and then we were bound by the bog on either side. On the right it was out away, and in use, with piles of turf in clamps; big deep square bog-holes full of water on the other; the bog, in its natural state, a wild range of long brownish grass and heather, with here and there a bunch of fuzze.

There were some sportsmen on the bog, shooting grouse. I heard shots and presently I saw two coming rapidly towards us, two men (officers), in gray tweed coats, with a brace of red setters at their heels.

How quickly they walked! They headed us, and sprang over a wet ditch, just on our pathway, and came straight towards us.

I saw at a glance that one of them was Captain Karslake, and, wrapping my tell-tale hands in my blue-checked apron, I held my head down as they passed.

"I would not be surprised if that was a pretty girl," said a man whom I had never seen before.

"Oh, bother pretty girls out grouse-shooting!" said my friend, ungallantly. "Which way did those birds go? You must shoot up, Smith; we have only four braces yet, and it's near eleven o'clock."

"Hullo! hullo! you two!" cried a voice from the heather, "hold on a bit—wait for me!" and a very puffing, red-faced figure came towards us, with a brace of birds in his hands.

"I say—stop!—stop!—Karslake," very evidently halted. "Do you know," panting, "that we are now on the very ground where Philip Deane—you've heard the story—shot young Sim long ago?"

"Oh! so we are," shouted back a voice; "but come on—come on!"

"The bog hole where they found the body—" but we had already heard enough, and I quickened my walk to a kind of run, eager to escape from earshot.

"There it is—down there," said my father, suddenly, "you see it's quite in a hollow and very lonely. There you see the Vann, it's half-a-mile off, and there are the cabins to the left; we will go to them first. I'll wait outside, and you go in and ask for a drink of water and leave to sit down, as you are walking to Boskell looking for work. Go into the long house with the byre first; that's where the girl lived that found the button. If that is no use try the little one with one window, and mind you lead the subject round to the murder of Mr. Sim."

CHAPTER XXII.

The first cabin I was directed to I entered, or rather looked over the half-door into a thick smoke, and asked if anyone was within, was the long one with the byre that my father, who had taken a seat on a stile just beyond it, pointed out.

"There's no one in but granny," said a tattered child. "Mother's away in the town selling fowl."

"Who is it? What's wanted?" said a cracked, peevish, old voice, from the chimney, and for answer I boldly pushed back the door, and walked in and showed myself.

There was an old hag gathered up on a low seat, engaged in pushing sticks under a pot that hung from the chimney by a black chain—a pot containing potatoes, and known in Ireland as a skillett.

"Will you let me come in and rest a bit, for I'm from a good way off going to Boskell?" I said, in my best brogue.

"Oh, aye, surely and welcome!" looking up sharply, stick in hand. "Your a stranger, I'm thinking?"

"Yes," sitting down as I spoke.

"From beyant Boskell? And what do they call you?"

"Ellen—Ellen Bourke."

"Oh! There was one of that name wunst I knew well, but she was a lady. Aye, deary me, she had her own troubles," shaking her head.

"I mane about what happened hereabouts," said, glad of the opening. "'Tis yourself, ay, course, knows all about it, if anyone did. Wasn't there someone shot in this part long ago?"

"Oh, he was shot, sure enough, within two hundred yards' where you are sitting, and it was me own laughter heard the moans of him when she was coming home from milking. But it's an old story now—so long ago that I almost disremember it myself, until you called it up to me."

"I'd like to hear it," I said, rolling my hands up in my apron, "and 'tis yourself

could tell it well, I'll go bail," I added, with barefaced flattery.

"'Twas a grave business. 'Tis not often the quality takes to shooting one and another. Poor young, quiet gentleman! I mind well seeing his body brought up out of the bog-hole. It was just as if it had happened only the day before, and he had been there weeks. There was one black-looking gentleman very active about making searches. He used to be down here constant on the quiet, looking, looking; but he never found anything, with all his hunting, late and early. Me daughter Mary found a button—a brass thing, but she gave it to one of the childer, and sure he lost it. Oh, faix, that was a rare handsome young gentleman that was tried for his life—the Englishman, so handsome! Aye, dear me! I've stood on the road and watched him riding with Miss Bourke, or out with the horse-soldiers. Somehow, I had a notion that, with all the talk, and work, and the trial, and his being sent to Botany Bay, and dying there, that he was not the man that did it, after all."

I could hardly restrain an exclamation, but I did, by pinching my hidden hands and biting my lips. Was she not going to say any more? She was sitting, looking in a dreamy way into the low, well-kindled turf fire, as if seeing some far-away object.

"What makes you think that?" I asked at last.

"Oh, we all has our own thoughts, and is welcome to them," giving me a sharp glance, "and 'tis no use talking now. The man that was transported is dead. It would do him no good now, and it was only a couple of years after that we heard a queer thing from Micky Connor—too late to be of any use, by the same token!"

"And what was that?"

"Oh, Micky was a rare boy for trouble, wan way or another. What with poaching, and snaring, and even worse, he had to keep away from home at times, and just at that time he had got into a worse business than usual, about a few sheep, and he made off to America, and did not come home for a good bit; but he lands in here one Sunday, and after a bit, when we heard all his side of news, we began talking, and among other things we told him all that business, and he seemed in a terrible way when he first heard it was young Mr. Deane had got into all the trouble, and was dead, and Mrs. Deane, too, wid a broken heart, so they said."

"He never done it no more than I did. A rare gentleman! Many a time I carried his bag and his gun, and he gave me half-a-crown. It was the thin, narrow-faced black one that used to shoot with him. I met him—I remember it well, and have every reason to, for it was an evening I was hiding on account of a bit of talk about them hoggets. I was lying behind a bank in a boren, and he passed down, and he wore a white coat. It was moist, and I heard a shot about half-an-hour after. I never misdoubted but it was some one discharging his gun before going home, and a while after this gentleman passed. I heard him coming—running this time, and I lay flat. He had no white coat on, I noted, and his collar all up about his face; but it was the same. I'm ready to take my dying oath of that," he said.

"And where is this man now?" I asked.

"Faix, miss, where he can do no good or harm to anyone—he is dead this ten years; but I believe he was right, for a while after, when my eldest son Jim was cutting up the trees and bushes in a fence that borders the bog road, he found something."

"What was it?" I gasped.

"I don't know that I could exactly tell you that. It would be no good now the parties is dead, and it would only lead to trouble and annoyance and having the polis coming round; and maybe—things is so contrary—they would be making out that Jim had a hand in it. Any-

way, he has it hid away, and he is very cautious with regard to it; indeed, for all I can tell you, he has made away with it, for it's not a safe thing for anyone to have."

"It wasn't a gun, was it?"

"No, it wasn't that. You take a terrible interest in it, I see. Young people is curious, 'specially young girls; but we can't be telling you too much. What is taking you to Boskell the day?"

"I was going in to buy a few hanks of worsted."

"Oh! for knitting?"

"Yes; it's time I was going on, thanking you kindly for the accommodation," rising as I spoke.

"Oh! ye can't be going out o' this like that; you must stop and have a few of the praties. There's nothing else but a sup o' buttermilk, but you're kindly welcome, and so just sit down again."

"I know that, but I'm not hungry. I broke my fast late. I'll come in again when I'm passing this way, and maybe you'll finish that, and tell me what it was that your son found."

"Well, you beat all for curiosity, I'll say that."

"You see you told me so much, and left off, like in a book, and all this is very interesting to folks that hear nothing, like me."

"Well, well, well, alannah, we will see about it another day. I was an old fool to tell you about it at all, at all!" shaking her head, irritably.

It was evident there was no more to be told on this occasion, and no use in waiting, so I said good-bye from the half-door, and picking my way through the muddy yard—if yard it could be called—joined my father at the gate, but walked on past him, in case of rousing the suspicions of my late hostess, who had followed me to the door, as I knew, quite instinctively.

"Come back here," she screamed, "come here, avick, I've one word more to say to you. See here, honey," lowering her voice as I hurried up to her, "are you so mortal anxious to know what he found?"

"I am—I am, of course," I answered, breathlessly.

"You have some reason for it, I see," winking wickedly.

"I'll never deny it, I have," I returned, boldly.

"Nothing for nothing is no gain to anyone. See here now. I know where it is, and what would you give to see it? Come now, there's a chance for you!"

"Whatever you like."

"Would ten shillings—"

"A pound and a pound of tobacco, if you will give it to me!" I exclaimed, forgetting all about my tongue in my eagerness.

"I was sure of it," said the old lady fox, in a tone of triumph. "I knew from the shape of your foot you were a lady, not to spake o' your grand words. There's no throwing dust yet into my eyes, old and blear as they look, honey. Who are you?" she asked, imperiously.

"You will not tell me your secret, why should I tell you mine?" I said doggedly.

"It seems to me that mine is the most worth of the two," she replied, nodding her head.

"I will tell you who I am if you will promise on your word to keep it to yourself—promise faithfully."

"Oh! aye! I can promise all that."

"I am Philip Deane's daughter!"

"Oh! wirra, wirra, what's this you are telling me?" stepping back, and casting up her hands.

"The plain truth," taking off my bonnet. "You have seen my mother—is my face like hers?"

"There's no denying that it is—no denying that. Do you want to clear him?"

"Of course I do."

"An' what will you give me for it?"

"I'm very poor; but I can scrape up five pounds."

"Five pounds and some tobacco, and a lock of tay and sugar?" said the old dame, who knew how to drive a bargain. "Will you go as far as that?"

"Yes."

"Well, come on Saturday afternoon, and you'll get it; but if Jim finds it out he will destroy me."

"No, why should he? Would he not clear the innocent, and punish the guilty?" I asked, indignantly.

"Oh! it's an old story now, you see. Anyway, there's no doubt but I'll have to tell the height of myself in lies to keep him aisy. Well, miss, good-day to you, and I'll expect you back on Saturday without fail; and you'll mind the tay and sugar, and a few ounces of tobacco? I'll not keep you no longer; and Jim will be coming round to his dinner. You'd better be going ere he sees you, for though the dress is what you are aiming at right enough, any man can see that it's a lady as is inside it!"

(To be continued.)

YOUTH.

"And the spring was in my heart, and I was glad."

YOUTH, and Hope, and Love—how these seem to accord one with the other! As well imagine a springtime without flowers as these sweet gifts of the gods apart. On the painter's canvas they are symbolised together, and in the poet's song their names are breathed in unison.

But widely diverse is the more material prose of life, and few only can look back to those sunny hours with the same faith in which they entered upon the race; yet the higher the nature the deeper will be the memory of those unforgetten dreams which in youth made our world, and some association (pleasant and sweet it must have been) led a poet to put aside the busy present, with its ever-crowding cares, and, as he tells us in his verse, be again a child.

"The sight of these calls back the robin's song,
That from the dark old tree
Beside the door, sang clearly all day long—
And I, secure in early piety,
Listen'd, as if I heard an angel sing
With news from heaven, which he did bring
Fresh every day to my untainted years,
When birds and flowers and I were happy peers."

But ah, fair maiden and gallant youth! you cannot put back the shadow on the dial, nor stay the fleeting foot of Time! Waste not, then, this golden holiday that is given to your trust; rather employ it in building up those high and brave resolves for the noontide of your day to fulfil!

Yet, why should not the sweet memories of that Eden-green be with us all through the summer of our lives? and, to carry out that analogy, even unto the fall-time?

Apply, and with a quaint beauty, has Coleridge expressed this sentiment:—

"Oh, youth! for years so many and sweet,
What strange disguise hast thou put on?
I'll think it be a fond deceit
To make believe that thou hast gone!
Thy vesper-bell hath not yet toll'd,
And thou wast aye a macker bold!
Life is but thought; so think I will,
That thou and I are house-mates still."

THE EMPRESS OF GERMANY has offered a prize of £200 for the best portable hospital tent for use in war and during epidemics at the Antwerp Exhibition.

The old English posy, a small bunch of flowers with natural stems tied by a ribbon, is one of the poetical ideas recovered from the past, where we must go for sentiment and pretty notions. The posy was first carried by ladies last year, and now the court florists are making them up for weddings and state drawing-rooms.

WANTED AN HEIRESS.

—10:—

CHAPTER X.—(continued.)

"CONFOUND the nurse!" exclaimed the irascible old man; "and yet, perhaps you had better go, my boy, for the present. I've got to see Vellum to-day. I must reserve a little of my strength for him; we've a deal of business on hand. I mean to surprise the Cavendishes by leaving them next to nothing. Cavendish is bad enough, coming here so constantly and boring me with his society on the strength of a second cousinship; but his wife and daughters are a great deal worse. Purring, cat-like women all of them, who wouldn't contradict me if I were to say the moon was made of green cheese, through fear of offending me. They can ridicule me behind my back, though, and laugh at what they are pleased to call my close-fisted ways. Well, well, the laugh won't always be on their side. If I have got one foot in the grave I am quite capable of giving anyone I don't like a kick with the other."

The doctor entered the room just in time to hear the conclusion of this characteristic speech. He was followed in a few minutes by Mr. Vellum, the family lawyer.

"The doctor and the lawyer," remarked Sir Algernon, dryly. "It only wants the parson to render the funeral trio complete. Amuse yourself as well as you can for the rest of the day, Arthur. I shall have some work for you to do to-morrow."

Thus dismissed Arthur Joscelynn went downstairs and smoked by himself in the gloomy dining-room, where family portraits stared him out of face in every direction. After a long chat with old Amos he strolled out to look up old acquaintances, and to take a general survey of the place where so many of his early days had been spent.

He found the farmers one and all inclined to grumble at Sir Algernon's unsatisfactory rule. Some even hinted at his death, and ventured to hope that Arthur Joscelynn would be the new master and landlord. They could not prevail upon the baronet to lower the rents when crops were scanty or stock barren; neither would he compensate them for repairs made at their own expense. Arthur Joscelynn could only listen to the many complaints poured into his ear—it was out of his power to remedy the evil.

If Camoys Hall were only his, and he were free to marry Ethel Dare, how, rich and full life would be for him, he reflected rather sadly. But Sir Algernon was as changeable as a weathercock, and the engagement he had entered into with Gwendoline Massey was, after all, his best and safest resource against future poverty. It would never do to desert the substance for the shadow.

"You don't seem overburdened with work here," he remarked to the sexton, who was 'tidying-up' some of the graves in the pretty churchyard in a listless, disconsolate manner. "The place is too healthy for people to die of any complaint but extreme old age."

"You're right, sir," replied the deeply injured man, pathetically; "I do assure you that I haven't buried a living soul for the last six months."

Arthur laughed, and the old sexton looked up indignantly. He knew nothing of the bull he had made, and the healthiness of the place was a sore subject to him, since it meant a scarcity of funerals, and a corresponding scarcity of fees.

Arthur Joscelynn went back to Camoys Hall, and wrote a long letter to Gwendoline Massey. He was a good letter-writer, able to dress up the smallest incident and render it interesting, and he found no difficulty in filling page after page.

He heartily wished that all his love-making with the heiress could have been carried on in the same way.

Such a wish had never once crossed his mind in connection with Ethel Dare; but

then he was in love with her, while for Gwendoline, apart from her money, he cared but little.

CHAPTER XI.

GWENDOLINE MASSEY regretted her lover's prolonged absence, although, in her frequent letters to him, she urged him to remain at Camoys Hall until Sir Algernon's silliness should take a turn for the better. Selfishness did not form one of Gwendoline's failings.

She had Arthur Joscelynn's long, delightful letters to console her, not to mention the preparations for the coming marriage.

Her engagement was to be but a short one, and her time and attention were fully taken up by the many different tradespeople she had to see, and the pleasant cares and duties that devolved upon her as bride-elect.

Percival Massey was beginning to lose the haggard, care worn look that had distinguished him more or less since his first meeting with Vincent Eyre. Save for one or two chance encounters in society, he had not seen any more of the young doctor since the day of the garden party at Twickenham.

The haunting sense of fear that Vincent Eyre had all unconsciously aroused within the financier's heart died out gradually, as Percival Massey failed to detect any suspicious symptoms betokening a dangerous knowledge of the past in Vincent's manner towards him.

Gwendoline's engagement had gone a long way towards restoring his peace of mind.

The wealth he fondly believed Arthur Joscelynn to possess, and the good family connections that young man could really lay claim to, were a source of immense consolation to Percival Massey.

Let him but see his darling child safe, "roselined from the cold," in a splendid home of her own, with a devoted husband to care for her, the future and all it might contain of evil for him would seem far less formidable.

His sensitive, easy-going, super-refined nature made him shrink instinctively from anxiety and trouble. He tried to conceal his domestic skeleton not merely from the world's gaze, but from his own as well. But its bones would rattle occasionally, just to remind him that it still existed.

He was sitting in his study one morning, smoking the little scented cigarettes that he mostly favoured, when, to his mingled fear and annoyance, he beheld Vincent Eyre coming by the tree-shaded gravel path towards the house.

"That man again!" he exclaimed to himself, starting up nervously from his easy chair. "What can he want here? He has never received a second invitation. I was not likely to send him one. Has he, can he have discovered anything? Pooh! Nonsense! There is nothing to discover; I did my work too well for that. And yet the sight of him is sufficient to throw me into a nervous tremour. Gwendoline must go down to him; I dare not."

Percival Massey went to the door of his study, and beckoned to his daughter as she ran downstairs, the footman having informed her that a visitor was in the drawing-room.

"I think it is Dr. Eyre, Gwendie," he whispered hurriedly. "I cannot see him; you must make excuses for me. I do not feel strong enough to bear the least excitement this morning."

"Are you any worse, papa dear?" inquired Gwendoline, anxiously.

"No, child, no. I only want to be quiet. Get rid of your visitor as soon as possible, and then come back to write some letters for me."

Gwendoline proceeded to the drawing-room where Vincent Eyre stood on the hearthrug, awaiting her arrival.

"Good morning, Doctor Eyre," she said, brightly, showing no surprise at the unexpected visit. "I don't think we have met since the grand fancy fair. Pray accept my grateful thanks for the many articles you helped me to dispose of on that occasion. I

was among the most fortunate of the stall-keepers in getting rid of my goods."

"There were plenty of volunteers hovering round your stall, Miss Massey, besides my humble self," he replied, holding her small white hand just a little longer in his own than was absolutely necessary. "I—I happened to be passing, and I thought I would call to inquire after Mr. Massey's health. He was looking very ill the last time I saw him."

Gwendoline mercifully kept back a smile at this extraordinary statement. That a doctor whose practice confined him chiefly to the East-end of London should "happen to be passing" the Masseys' mansion at Twickenham, as a matter of course, seemed somewhat unlikely. She made no comment upon it, however, merely thanking him for the solicitude he had evinced respecting her father's health.

"I fear that he will never be well or strong again," she said, rather sadly. "He is not able to receive visitors in his present state of health. Papa wished me to tell you this, and to apologise for his non-appearance."

"No apology is necessary," replied Vincent Eyre, wondering if illness or a preconceived dislike for himself kept Percival Massey in the background. He devoutly hoped that it might not be the latter, since Gwendoline's choice of a husband would doubtless depend upon her father's decision.

He had come with his mind made up to propose to her, should a favourable opportunity present itself. Fortune had been kind to him in this respect; and yet, when he found himself face to face with the girl he loved, it seemed so difficult to begin.

Earnest, honourable, passionately in love, he lacked suitable words in which to express the wealth of affection hoarded up in his heart for Gwendoline.

Arthur Joscelyn, lacking the affection, was never at a loss for honeyed phrases and terms of fondest endearment.

"I should have called some time ago," he continued; "but my brother and I were engaged in following up an important clue that is likely ere long to lead to the apprehension of the man, the robber and forger, who abused my father's confidence in years gone by, and brought him to an untimely grave, over which yet hangs the dark shadow of unmerited disgrace, that we are straining every nerve to dispel. I mentioned the circumstances of the case to you once, Miss Massey. You may have forgotten them."

"Indeed I have not!" said Gwendoline, earnestly. "They were too strange and sad to be lightly forgotten. I have wondered several times since then if you were any nearer to finding the man."

"I trust that he will not be permitted to remain undetected and unpunished," rejoined Vincent, sternly. "When once we can rivet the last link in our chain of evidence against him, and assure ourselves that we are on the right track to hunt him down, our task will be well-nigh over. That he still lives Richard and I are now certain. His trial and sentence will be more than sufficient to remove each cruel, unfounded aspersion from our father's honoured name."

"You have set yourself a noble task," remarked Gwendoline, enthusiastically. "I shall be glad to hear that you have succeeded in accomplishing it."

"Your interest and sympathy would be sufficient to spur a man on, if he were growing weary," said Vincent, gratefully. "To turn to a less painful subject, I am about to leave my present practice. I have received an offer from a West-end doctor to go in partnership with him. He is to take all the fanciful cases that require tact and patience, while I am to do all the hard work; that is far more to my liking."

"Indeed! that will be a decided advance for you," Gwendoline replied pleasantly, wondering a little why this young man should make her his confidant, and tell her all his plans. "We shall hear next of your being knighted, and becoming Sir Vincent Eyre."

"Gwendoline, Miss Massey, can you imagine why I have striven to improve my position? why I now covet wealth and a great name far more than of old? It is because they will help to lessen the distance that exists between us, and render me less unworthy of your love. Only consent to become my wife later on, and there is nothing I will not do or dare in order to win you. Gwendoline, have pity upon me; do not send me from you, my love, my love!"

"Doctor Eyre! Oh! please, do not say any more."

Gwendoline, as she uttered this appeal, strove to withdraw the hand that Vincent Eyre held imprisoned in his own. His intense earnestness half-veiled, and half-frightened her.

An older woman would have admired him for it, and overlooked the want of grace and *debonnair* devotion, in his rugged, passionate wooing.

Gwendoline, however, used only to Arthur Joscelyn's false, softly spoken words of love, wholly unprepared for a second proposal, shrank from him, and longed to make her escape.

"I have startled you," he said remorsefully. "I have been too hasty, too presumptuous. But, Gwendoline, my love, I know how to be patient. Only give me a word of encouragement now—only say that you care just a little for me, and I will be content."

"It is impossible," cried Gwendoline, regaining her self-possession, and glancing timidly up at the tall young doctor, whose strong square face and dark blue eyes, full of wistful longing, were not without a certain manly beauty.

"I am sorry to give you pain, but I can never become your wife, Dr. Eyre."

Vincent Eyre drew himself up slowly, with the air of a man who had just received his death-blow.

"Yes I suppose it is impossible for anyone to love me," he said bitterly. "I am one by myself, doomed to drag out a lonely existence, without any of the sweet, domestic joys that fall to the share of other men. Is it my plainness or my poverty that most repulses you, Miss Massey?"

"Neither," rejoined Gwendoline. "Oh, I am so sorry, so very sorry, that it should have come to this! I like you as a friend, Dr. Eyre, but you can never be anything else to me. I am already engaged, and in less than six months I expect to be married."

"To whom are you engaged?" he inquired almost roughly. "At least permit me to know the name of my successful rival."

"I do not think you have any right to question me thus," she said, with gentle, girlish dignity. "I have promised to marry Mr. Joscelyn."

Vincent Eyre made no immediate reply. He knew that Arthur Joscelyn had the reputation of being a fast-living man about town, who had contrived to squander more than one large fortune. And yet, with all his failings, this fashionable man butterfly had wooed and won the golden-haired princess for whom Vincent himself, willing to work and wait, and suffer for her, had sought in vain.

"Pardon me for what I am about to say," he presently remarked, "but do you think Mr. Joscelyn is likely to make a good husband? I know nothing of him personally, although some very unfavourable reports of his doings in society have reached my ears from time to time. Are you wise in thus placing your happiness in his keeping?"

Gwendoline's great blue eyes flashed scornfully.

"I did not think that you would stoop to decry another man simply because he has succeeded where you have failed," she said haughtily. "I gave you credit for more nobility, Dr. Eyre. I refuse to listen to another word from you with regard to Mr. Joscelyn."

Vincent Eyre bowed his head submissively, while a vivid flush dyed his dark face crimson.

"I will say no more upon that subject," he

replied, sadly. "But you blame me unjustly, Miss Massey, when you deem me capable of attempting to injure another man by speaking ill of him from motives of spite and envy. Believe me or not as you will, your future happiness alone was in my mind when I warned you against Arthur Joscelyn. All hope of winning you for myself is over, never to return, but my interest in your welfare still survives, although it shall never be intruded upon your notice again."

As he turned to go, with a weary, broken look on his face, lately so eager and animated, Gwendoline's anger against him passed away, giving place to a feeling of pity. She was only a young girl, without any experience of the world to fall back upon, incapable of seeing far below the surface. And yet some fine instinct told her that here was a man who had just placed at her disposal, a love that fell to the share of but few women, and who was going away disappointed and desolate. She went after him and held out her hand, saying frankly as she did so,—

"Please forgive me, Dr. Eyre, for my unkind words just now. You should not have spoken as you did of Mr. Joscelyn, but I acquit you of any unworthy motive in so doing. I am sorry to have given you so much pain. I would have striven to guard against this had I foreseen it, but you took me so completely by surprise, we had met so seldom, and—"

"It was not necessary to meet you of ten in order to love you," he replied, with the ghost of a smile. "Since you wish—we will part friends, Miss Massey. The memory of my one cherished day-dream alone remains to me. I shall never venture to indulge in another."

"What did that young fellow want, Gwendoline?" inquired Percival Massey, as his daughter entered his study, with suspiciously red eyes. "I thought he would never go."

"He came to inquire after your health, papa, and—"

"Yes, what else?" said the financier tremulously.

"To propose to me," sobbed Gwendoline, burying her fair face on her father's shoulder. "I can't help feeling sorry for him, papa. He was so terribly in earnest, poor fellow."

"Confound his impudence!" muttered Percival Massey, with an evident air of relief. "A penniless doctor proposing to the daughter of a millionaire! Of course you acquainted him with your engagement, Gwendoline, and sent him about his business?"

"Yes, papa, he will never come here again."

"So much the better. Did he—ah—say anything else?"

"No. Oh! yes, he is going in partnership with a West-end doctor, and he has discovered some important evidence against the man who robbed and ruined his father. He hopes soon to discover him, and bring him to justice. He told me all this before making that fortunate proposal."

Percival Massey's face grew hastily pale, and a nervous tremour darted through a thin frame.

"Reach me the drops, Gwendoline," he said fretfully. "This constantly-recurring faintness is unbearable. When you are married, child, I think I shall go abroad and live; here altogether. I can't stand our uncertain English climate any longer. Try to forget that young man, and his absurd proposal. I hope we have seen the last of him now. I wish Arthur Joscelyn's uncle would either die or get better. Surely he need not keep his nephew in such close attendance upon him, all this time! You really ought to see more of your lover, with the wedding set for such an early date. Coming next week?—well, it's only right that he should. Never mind the letters now, pet; I want to be alone."

That night a dirty, crumpled missive, was handed to Percival Massey, among other letters. Gwendoline made some jesting remark upon its disreputable appearance. Her father put it carefully away in his pocket-book, after reading it, informing her, as he did so, that

was only a begging-letter from one of his Mudborough constituents.

In reality, it came from an old accomplice of his, appointing an interview, to take place in the neighbourhood of Seven Dials, and hinting, in obscure terms, at some rapidly approaching danger.

CHAPTER XII.

CAMOYS HALL was but a dull place at the best of times. Now that the owner of it had taken to his bed and seemed likely to stay there, the dullness and utter absence of all active interests nearly drove Arthur Joscelynn crazy.

Sir Algernon's miserly habits had induced him to let the shooting and fishing, while the conservatory and hothouses were rented by a gardener living close by, who sent the produce to London. One wretched old horse alone occupied the spacious stables, that were capable of accommodating a whole racing stud.

Arthur Joscelynn, when not in attendance upon his uncle, or discussing business matters with the bailiff, had positively no resources to fall back upon. He might not shoot or fish, he would not ride the broken-winded charger; and, in his heart of hearts, he sincerely wished that Sir Algernon would either make up his mind to die or get better.

He longed to return to town, while, at the same time, he feared to offend the baronet by leaving him while that irate old gentleman expressed a wish for him to remain.

Sir Algernon's illness, arising from a liver complaint of long standing, was as uncertain as it could well be, in which respect it resembled his temper. Some days he was better, some days worse, but, although the lamp of life flickered feebly, it showed no signs of going out. People who are not wanted often display this aggravating tendency to stay on, instead of going at once to join the great majority.

His manner towards his nephew frequently varied. Now it would be pleasant and confidential, then it altered, and became reserved, suspicious, and abrupt to the point of rudeness.

Arthur Joscelynn felt that his uncle's favour was but a poor peg on which to hang his future expectations. An imprudent deed, a mistimed sentence, would be sufficient to set the crusty old man against him; and more, destroy his chance of one day entering Camoys Hall as its owner.

His engagement formed his trump card—in that he was not likely to meet with any disappointment; nevertheless he wished, if possible, to keep in Sir Algernon's good graces.

He would feel more independent of Gwendoline Massey and her fortune, if the baronet would only think proper to make him his heir.

But, as the days flew swiftly by, and Sir Algernon's condition remained almost unchanged, save for slight fluctuations that did not imperil his life, Arthur Joscelynn became very impatient to be gone.

He wondered if Percival Massey would construe his prolonged absence as a slight offered to Gwendoline, or a want of lover-like attention and warmth.

The financier's good opinion was of the greatest importance to him, and he could not afford to lose it.

He was also anxious to have another interview with Paul Welford, in order to ascertain how that clever and crafty individual proposed going to work about the marriage settlements that were to throw dust in Percival Massey's eyes, and lead him to believe that his prospective son-in-law was really a wealthy man.

Engaged to Gwendoline Massey, with his marriage fixed to take place in the immediate future, Arthur Joscelynn still received letters from Ethel Dare and duly answered them, thereby leading the poor girl to believe in her lover more implicitly than ever.

He wished to prevent the faintest rumour of his intended marriage from reaching Ethel's

ears. He hoped to be able to keep her in total ignorance respecting it until the ceremony had actually taken place.

Then it would be out of her power to ruin him by denouncing his false, cruel conduct to Gwendoline.

Pride and delicacy would alike forbid her to adopt such a course towards his bride.

But now, with the marriage still unconsummated, a breath of suspicion would be sufficient to convert Ethel into a perfect little Nemesis, capable of coming between him and the wealthy fiancée upon whose gold all his hopes of future ease and happiness were centred.

Arthur Joscelynn hinted one day to the old housekeeper that his stay at Camoys Hall was drawing to a close.

She received the news with genuine regret, and more than a little apprehension.

"Eh, deary me, but I am sorry to hear that you think of going, sir!" exclaimed the ruddy-cheeked, wholesome-looking old countrywoman. "It's taken quite a weight off my mind lately to know that there was a strong hearty young gentleman in the house, close at hand in case anything should happen. The Hall is but a lonely place, with just a sick man and a few tottering old folks to defend it, if anyone should take it into their heads to break in."

"Why, Marjory, you surely are not afraid of burglars?" he said laughingly, "you never used to be so nervous. What on earth is there in this ramshackle old place to make it worth their while to pay you a visit?"

"More than you think for, sir," replied Marjory tartly. "There's the plate and the family jewels, that Sir Algernon keeps in the iron safe that stands in his bedroom; besides the gold snuff-box set with diamonds that George the Fourth gave to one of the Camoys."

"For doing nothing in particular, I suppose," remarked Arthur Joscelynn drily.

"Well, I don't know about that, sir; at any rate he got it, and it's locked up with all the other valuables in the iron safe."

"Sir Algernon should send such things to his banker's," replied the young man. "I am surprised to hear that he keeps them all in the house with him. I must speak to him about having them removed. Their being here exposes you all to more or less danger."

"So it do, sir, and that's what I've told Sir Algernon scores and scores of times. But he's that obstinate there's no getting him to listen to reason. He only laughs at me when I talk about burglars. It would be no laughing matter though, if two or three determined fellows were to break in some night, and find their way to his room. Not a gardener or a gamekeeper within call either, thanks to his nasty mean ways of letting everything off to other people instead of keeping up a good establishment of his own."

"Do you think it is generally known that Sir Algernon keeps these valuables in the house?" inquired Arthur Joscelynn, gravely.

"Well, I've tried to keep it as quiet as possible myself," continued Marjory; "but a silly gaby of a girl I had in from the village to help me with the cleaning saw the safe, and went and talked about it. I gave her a good scolding when the gossip got to my ears, but the mischief was done, and ever since then I've felt uneasy like as night comes on. There's a powerful lot of poachers and other loose characters about this part, and more than once I've caught some of 'em a lurchin round the house, and taking stock of it in a way that I didn't at all like. I do wish, sir, that you'd persuade Sir Algernon to send the plate and jewels to London."

"I'll do my best," said Arthur, and he went straight to the baronet's room to expostulate with him on the risk he ran in keeping such valuable things in such a lonely, unprotected place.

But Sir Algernon happened to be in a very bad temper. He flew into a passion when his nephew suggested the removal of the plate and jewels, and advised him to mind his own

business, and not meddle with the affairs of people much older and wiser than himself.

A gentle reminder that his visit had already exceeded its original length was also received with very bad grace. Sir Algernon, hurt and angry, told Arthur to go as soon as he liked, since he was so anxious to leave Camoys Hall; and the uncle and nephew parted for the night in anything but a satisfactory manner.

Vexed and disappointed at the result of his earnest endeavour to please all parties in order to promote his own interests, Arthur Joscelynn went to bed, and slept soundly for several hours.

He was awakened long before daylight by a shrill scream—the scream of an old man in fear and pain. Then women's voices rang out in a shrill cry for help.

Jumping out of bed and throwing on his dressing-gown, Arthur Joscelynn opened the door of his room in answer to the frantic hands that were beating upon it.

"What is the matter?" he demanded hastily.

"The master, sir, the master!" wailed the old butler, "they're killing him! They've broken in at last and his room is full of them, black villains that they are. Oh! save him! save him—he is so weak and helpless!"

"Send one of the servants to give the alarm," shouted Arthur Joscelynn, as he dashed along the corridor in the direction of his uncle's room.

There a terrible sight awaited him.

Sir Algernon, with the restlessness of old age, had been awake when the burglars entered his room.

Brave as a lion, but without a lion's strength, he had attempted to call for help, and even offered some faint resistance. But a blow on the head had speedily stunned him; and when Arthur Joscelynn rushed into the room one thickset fellow was standing over him, while two others were striving to burst open the door of the iron safe that stood at the foot of the ponderous canopied bedstead.

Sir Algernon moaned feebly, and attempted to move.

As his cowardly assailant lifted a knotted stick to deal him a second blow that would, in all probability, have proved fatal, Arthur Joscelynn darted forward, armed with the bright steel poker he had caught up in lieu of any other available weapon.

"Take that, you villain!"

"That" was a tremendous blow on his head, that caused the burglar to measure his length on the ground beside his victim.

Finding themselves molested, the other two rushed upon Arthur Joscelynn—one with his bludgeon, the other with his knife.

"Thank Heaven they have no firearms," thought the young man, as he strove hard to keep them at bay.

He could read in their grim faces, blazing eyes, and compressed lips that a double murder would mean less to them than being taken. It was a question of life against life.

In his college days Arthur Joscelynn had enjoyed the reputation of being a first-rate boxer. He could oppose scientific skill against the mere brute force and superior strength of his assailants.

He contrived to disarm the ruffian who carried the knife, which weapon he dashed through the window, where it was found upon the lawn the next morning.

The old butler had gone to summon help; the frightened female crew had retreated to the attics, and thus, so far as all friendly aid went, he was left quite alone.

The burglars renewed the attack, and an ugly blow from the bludgeon laid Arthur Joscelynn's face open, and made him feel sick and giddy.

"My nephew—spare my nephew!" cried Sir Algernon, his love for Arthur surmounting all other considerations. "You shall have all, only do not kill him. Oh! Heaven help us, he is down."

Arthur Joscelynn had, indeed, been forced

upon his knees. Making a supreme effort he struggled to his feet again, and struck at his would-be murderers with unexpected vigour. The arm of one hung helpless by his side, thanks to the steel poker. With a savage yell the remaining burglar sought to overcome the now enfeebled young man.

"You young bloodhound, I'll do for you yet if I get a lifer for it," he said, hoarsely.

But he relaxed his tigerish hold of Arthur Joscelyn as the sound of men's feet rushing up the wide staircase fell upon his ear. He darted to the window, and threw it up, not in time, however, to elude the firm grasp of half-a-dozen men, who entered the room in a body, and took him by the arm in the most familiar manner, without waiting to be introduced.

After a little trouble he was secured and handcuffed. His companions in crime were not in a condition to offer any resistance; one having his arm broken, the other being still insensible.

"Warm work for one, sir," remarked a farmer, who had been summoned among others from the tap-room of the village inn by the frightened old butler. "It's not every man that would have tackled those fellows single-handed. You've left your mark on them, but I'm afraid they've handled you roughly in return."

"Never mind me," said Arthur Joscelyn anxiously. "Look to Sir Algernon. In his weak state this shock may prove fatal."

The baronet was laid carefully upon the bed, and a messenger was dispatched to summon the doctor. The women servants, headed by Marjory, came flocking in, now that all danger was over, and their master strove to thank the men, chiefly his own tenants, who had arrived upon the scene only just in time to prevent a terrible tragedy.

"Now come away, please, and leave the housekeeper to look after Sir Algernon," said Arthur Joscelyn, striving to conceal the pain he was enduring. "He has had far too much excitement already to-night. Can any of you recognise these fellows?" he continued, pausing in the hall to survey the captured burglars, then awaiting the arrival of the police.

"I know one of them by sight," replied the landlord of the inn. "He's a poacher by trade, and I suppose he wanted to get a step higher, and share in the plunder of a big robbery. That's what comes of being too ambitious, young man."

When Arthur Joscelyn and the doctor stood by Sir Algernon's bedside later on, the baronet rallied a little from the stupor into which he had fallen, and placed his white, wrinkled hand in that of his nephew's, saying as he did so: "Archie, my boy, you have saved my life. But for you those men would have killed me. I shall not forget the bravery you have displayed to-night. Well, well, where there's a will there's a way. Don't expect anything from me beyond gratitude; however, a good deed is its own reward, you know."

Arthur Joscelyn merely smiled. But he mentally decided that a more tantalising, aggravating old man than his uncle had never been permitted to exist.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Oh! Archie, it is so pleasant to have you with me again; I have been longing for your return, only I didn't wish to take you away from poor Sir Algernon. We read the account of the burglary in the daily papers. They all spoke highly of the courage you displayed, and I felt so proud of you, and so thankful that you had escaped any serious injury. That scar on your face! oh, that will soon disappear. You foolish fellow, to think so much about it! Why, it is a mark of honour. And now tell me how you left Sir Algernon?"

Gwendoline poured these remarks forth in single breath, while standing in the large drawing-room, with her arms around Archie Joscelyn's neck. Her lover had come back

to the Laurels safe and sound, and her large, soft, blue eyes shone with thankfulness and deep, tender feeling.

So young, so fair, so loving, not to be loved and treasured in return seemed a sad fate to be meted out to her.

Even Archie Joscelyn felt this vaguely, and contrived to throw unusual warmth into the caresses he bestowed upon his fiancée.

"Oh, I left the old gentleman in an unusually amiable mood," he replied lightly. "He approves of my engagement, and I am the bearer of a letter and a bracelet, his present to you. He wants your portrait, Gwendie, so we must have a good one taken and sent for his inspection."

"Do you think he is likely to recover? Will he be able to come to our wedding?" cried the girl, eagerly. "I should so much like to see him. How kind of him to send me a present!"

"He may get better, or he may die to-morrow," was the unsatisfactory reply. "Even the doctor can give no decided opinion as to his condition, and the probable duration of his life. I don't think he will ever leave the house again, though, till he is carried to the churchyard. I shall have to take my bride to see him if he lasts long enough. Poor old boy! his parting benediction to me consisted of, 'You're a fool, sir, with more money than wit,' because I inadvertently let out that I always travelled first-class. With all his money he would only permit himself to go second, and age has put a fine old crust upon his temper."

"Have you brought the letter and the bracelet with you, Archie?"

"Yes, they are in my pocket," said Archie, producing a morocco velvet-lined case and a square envelope with a crest on it, while he threw a furtive glance in the direction of the massive pier-glass over the mantel-piece.

That partly-healed scar on his face annoyed him terribly. He had contemplated it from every possible angle of vision when alone. The burglars, now in prison awaiting their trial, could not, in his opinion, have dealt him a worse injury. Anything calculated to detract from his personal appearance was of serious importance to Arthur Joscelyn, whose face, strictly speaking, was like that of the milkmaid in the old song, his fortune.

"What a splendid bracelet! I have not another to equal it. Look, Archie, it is fit for a duchess to wear."

Gwendoline had opened the case and was gazing delightedly at the superb diamond bracelet flashing and gleaming within on the dark blue velvet.

"It isn't bad," he rejoined, pleased to think that a relative of his had bestowed it upon her. "Sir Algernon's a stingy old hunk, but when he does open his heart and bestow a gift it's sure to be something worth having. What has he said to you in his letter, Gwendie?"

Gwendoline ran hastily through the letter, the first that the old baronet had written for many a long day. It was worded in the pedantic courtly style belonging to a bygone age suggestive of minuets, ruffles, powder, and periwigs. Every line bespoke the writer to be a scholar and a gentleman, while a certain wistfulness of tone that pervaded this congratulatory epistle from an old and suffering man to a young blooming girl brought the unbidden tears to Gwendoline's eyes.

"I shall always keep this letter of Sir Algernon's," she remarked gently, as she folded the thick cream-laid paper and replaced it in the envelope. "He says such nice things in it, Archie, and speaks of you as being his favourite nephew. I am quite sure that he only wants understanding, and that we shall one day become firm friends."

"You'll take him by storm," replied Archie. "He'll capitulate at once, and not say a wry word while you are present. He bullies me awfully, but I believe he likes me better than any of the Cavendishes, who play up to him in a manner that is simply disgusting."

"Are you going upstairs to see papa? He has not been so well again lately. I hardly know what to make of him—his failing health causes me a great deal of anxiety."

"Yes, I'll go up and report my return at headquarters. Why, where did this little elf spring from?" he exclaimed, glancing with amused curiosity at a small being who had noiselessly entered the room and nestled down beside Gwendoline. "Is she witch or fairy? Does she fly through the air on a broomstick to do your bidding, Gwendie?"

"It is only Birdie," laughed Gwendoline, passing her arm protectively round the child. "Don't you remember her? It is not so long ago since you brought her ashore from the wreck, Archie. She is a dear little thing, wise and old-fashioned, and very fond of being with me. Birdie, this is the gentleman who helped to save your life when the big ship that we so often talk about went down. Won't you go and give him a kiss?"

Birdie, a tiny creature with short curly dark hair, big, solemn eyes, with a ripple of demure fun lurking in their liquid depths, and a rosebud of a mouth, seemed inclined to resent this claim upon her gratitude, and to be chary in the matter of kisses.

"Birdie doesn't like him," she whispered, looking in her quaint Kate Greenaway costume, that became her admirably, a little old woman out shorter.

"Now I call that shameful conduct on your part, young lady," said Arthur, reproachfully. "I help to save you from a watery grave, and you won't even give me a kiss in return. Was ever brave knight so badly treated by fair damsel?"

Birdie couldn't understand this, but she knew she was being made fun of, and her baby dignity flamed up under the insult.

"I didn't ask 'oo to bring me ashore," she cried, burying her face in Gwendoline's lap. "Go away, bad man."

The bad man roared at this fresh proof of ingratitude, and Gwendoline interposed to prevent any further teasing.

"You must not ruffle my Birdie's feathers, Archie. She will like you better when she knows more of you. When you are gone she will ask a thousand questions about you, and take you off in the funniest way imaginable. But she is shy, and she has a strong objection to being laughed at."

"I won't offend little Dame Durden again," said Archie, penitently. "She looks as if she had just stepped out of an old picture in that dress, Gwendie. I suppose you have gained no information as to her possible kindred and belongings?"

"None whatever," was the reply; "the advertisement met with no response, and I should be sorry now if anyone came forward to claim her. It would seem too hard to give her up. Papa wished me to leave her at Woodlands; he thought she would be in the way here, but her quaint sayings and quiet mouse-like manner took his fancy, and he lets her sit by him for hours, turning over her picture-book, and asking him questions. Like most intelligent children she is a perpetual note of interrogation."

"Are you going to Algy Vavasour's reception, or whatever else he calls it, to-morrow?" asked Archie Joscelyn, after paying a visit to the invalid in the latter's private room, replete with every luxury and comfort. "He sent me a card of invitation written in hieroglyphics that it took me half an hour to decipher."

"Yes," said Gwendoline merrily. "If papa feels well enough we shall go; I am always sorry to lose any of Mr. Vavasour's 'at homes,' they are so original, and one meets such delightfully odd people there."

"I shall put in an appearance," continued Joscelyn, "just to see what Algy's latest lunacy consists of. Nearly all the lions of the season will be there too, and we shall have the pleasure of hearing them roar."

(To be continued.)

HOW TO LIVE.

Live for good that you may do;
For the errors you may fight;
For the aid that you can give;
For the needs you can relieve;
For the wrongs that you may right!
Live thus—God will prosper you.

Live for brave and noble deeds,
With an aim and purpose high,
With a faith and courage true,
With a future still in view,
Resting, when you come to die,
On God's love. To Heaven it leads.

Live, affliction to console,
Giving strength unto the weak,
Giving hope to dumb despair,
Like an answer to a prayer;
Be a help to those that seek,
Comforter to heart and soul!

Live to learn, add to be wise,
And to scatter what you know;
Live to sweeten sorrow's cup,
And to lift the fallen up;
Live for vice's overthrow,
And to rescue truth from lies!

Live to say: "Thy will be done!"
Even though it seem unjust
To your dim, imperfect sight;
What He doeth must be right.
Keep a firm, unwavering trust,
Doubting none and questioning none.

Live, that men may all be won
To be followers of the Light;
Live in fellowship of love;
Live so that, when called above,
And you bid the world "Good-night!"
God shall welcome you: "Well done!"

G. B.

CAN YOU BLAME HER?

CHAPTER XI.

THEY met again as strangers.

Sir John never raised his eyes to the beautiful vision presented to his notice; he offered her his arm, and they went downstairs to dinner. Only when they had taken their places did he really look at his companion; then for one moment he grew strangely pale. The hand that was toyed with the *menu* trembled like a woman's.

"I beg your pardon," he said, in the voice she knew so well, and these were the first words he addressed to her. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Stuart, but you bear a striking resemblance to someone I knew well. For the moment it almost overcame me."

"I am sorry," she said, gently. "Resemblances are strange things, Sir John."

"Very," and he looked at her intently. "I cannot say in what this consists—hair, colouring, and expressive eyes. You will forgive my frankness? I was so struck by it I almost fancied myself dreaming, and that the grave had given up its dead."

His companion sighed.

"Many people wish that it could."

"Do you?"

"I think not. There is so much pain in life, so many hours of disappointment and weariness. I think we ought to be glad the dear ones are safe for ever from all such sadnesses."

"I have often wished to meet you," said Sir John, with the courteous manner he always used to women. "From the moment when I heard my old friend had left a widow I resolved if ever I returned to England to go to Allerton and claim acquaintance with her for Maxwell's sake."

"You knew him well?"

"I believe I was the most intimate friend

he had, but I was abroad the last months he spent in England, and had absolutely no idea he had left a wife to mourn his death."

"Lord Allerton himself ignored it," returned Hyacinth, calmly. "Until last November we had never met."

"And now he loves you as his own child?"

"Yes; I don't think I could be dearer to him if I were really his own daughter," and the tears came welling up into her beautiful eyes.

"I have made you cry in the first hour of our introduction," said Sir John, penitently. "Can you ever forgive me, Mrs. Stuart?"

"You did not mean to pain me."

"Indeed, no; but I have been travelling beyond the bounds of civilisation, until I think I have forgotten the common politeness of society."

"Have you been abroad long?"

"Over a year."

Hyacinth studied her plate.

"I almost wonder anyone could stay away from England so long; but no doubt you had a strong inducement."

"I wanted to be away from everyone who had ever known me. I wanted forgetfulness. Excepting Carnegie I don't suppose I met a human creature who had ever heard my name. I was, as it were, dead to all who knew me."

"And you think it right?"

"It was not brave," he confessed, "but I can hardly call it wrong. You differ from me," seeing that she was silent.

"I think," said Hyacinth, slowly, "that everyone in this world has their work to do, that the comfort and well-being of others depends to a degree upon them; and with your wealth and responsibilities it seems to me there must have been many who needed you in England."

"Perhaps; but England had grown hateful to me. I longed for change and novelty."

"And were you happy?"

He smiled, but there was more of sadness than gaiety in his expression.

"I don't believe in that word, Mrs. Stuart. No one in this world save children and fools are really happy."

"I think you are mistaken."

"I hope I am; but you who have known such bitter sorrow, who were left, they tell me, a widow so soon after your wedding, surely you cannot be a believer in happiness?"

"I think I am. I have known heavy trouble, Sir John, but I am not unhappy."

"Not now," and he looked with a meaning smile to where the duke sat in attendance on some stately dowager. "I understand that Carnegie is a fortunate man, and has succeeded in making you forget the past."

She shook her head.

"I shall never forget the past."

"But you will let me congratulate you—"

She interrupted him.

"Indeed, Sir John, there is no cause. I am Maxwell Stuart's widow. Do not think of me by any other title."

The Duchess gave the signal for the ladies to retire.

Sir John held open the door for them. Then he drew his chair next the Earl of Allerton's.

"I hope you have not forgotten me, my lord?"

"I never forget old friends. Ah, Sir John, we have both known bitter trouble since we met."

"Don't call me Sir John," pleaded the Baronet. "I was always Jack to you in the old days."

"And it is only four years since we were all at the Towers! Who would think it?"

"The time has not changed you, Lord Allerton. I expect I am most altered. I know I feel quite aged since then."

"You look ten years older, but who can wonder with sorrow such as yours? I suppose you mean to settle down now?"

"I don't know."

"You mustn't go roving about the world like a prodigal son. There is too much depending upon you for that. Take up your position as one of the richest commoners in England. Go into Parliament, make yourself heard of. With your wealth a splendid career lays before you."

"I don't think I shall go abroad," said Sir John, slowly, "but I don't feel inclined to go into Parliament. Nature meant me for a simple country gentleman."

"Then be what Nature meant you to be. Settle down at The Elms, build model cottages, and rear prize cattle. It will be better than roaming over the world like a wandering Jew."

Sir John shuddered.

"I could never make a home of The Elms."

"Why not?"

"For me the place is haunted."

"Nonsense!"

"I mean it, Lord Allerton. The memory of my wife and child haunts the home where I lost them."

"Then take another wife."

Sir John looked troubled.

"I suppose some day it will come to that, but not yet—not while my darling haunts my dreams—while I see her before me and hear her voice a dozen times a day. Some day I suppose I shall have to marry, as so many men do for the sake of an heir, but ten years hence will do for that, when my wife's image is not so fresh in my memory, and I do not see her form in my dream."

"It was a terrible bereavement, but of course it was a relief that the child was taken."

"Relief!" quite forgetting how he had once told Hyacinth he thanked Heaven Nan was dead, since she was spared from growing up like her mother: "What can you mean?"

"She might have inherited her mother's malady."

"You are labouring under some extraordinary mistake!" cried Sir John.

"I thought it was generally known your wife died insane—that the last months of her life were spent in an asylum?"

The baronet sprang up in indignation.

"You have been grossly deceived, Lord Allerton. I assure you on my honour there is no foundation for such a report. My wife died of decline."

The old noble offered his apologies with ready tact, and Sir John accepted them as freely.

"You must come and see us in Eaton-square to convince me you have forgiven my blunder. I should like you to see Maxwell's boy. He's a splendid fellow! The image of his father!"

"How old is he?"

"Nearly three. I'm as proud of him as if he were my grandson."

"His mother must have married very young. She looks quite a girl now."

"She was barely eighteen. Fancy, wife, widow, mother, within the year."

"She seems to have got over it."

The Earl shook his head.

"She doesn't go about in a crape dress and black bonnet. She doesn't utter long rhapsodies about her grief and loneliness. She receives my guests cheerfully when they come to see me, and goes into society to please me, but for all that, Sir John, the grief's there. I have seen her time after time with the tear-stains on her face. Since she was presented some of the noblest names in England have been offered her, and she will not even listen to the offers. No, no! Don't tell me Queenie has got over it! I know better!"

Sir John accepted the invitation and went away, wondering whether the Duke of Carnegie would ever persuade the fair widow to change her mind. Somehow he thought not. He fancied Lord Allerton was right, and Mrs. Stuart's sorrow was only smouldering, not extinct.

He went home to dream of The Elms.

His dead wife Hyacinth stood before him, leading Mrs. Stuart by the hand.

"She will comfort you for my loss," said the well-remembered voice; then with a gentle touch the lost Hyacinth seemed to push her likeness into his arms.

"It is a wonderful resemblance!" thought Sir John, as he awoke and collected his scattered ideas. "I never saw a more pronounced resemblance even between sisters. Mrs. Stuart is prouder—more dignified—than my poor girl. She is a queenly woman—not the girlish creature of smiles and tears, but yet she is like her enough to bring my darling visibly before me."

He did not go to Eaton-square for nearly a week; he shrank from her, while he yearned for a meeting with the creature who was his dead wife's image. But at last, meeting the Duke of Carnegie in the Park, his Grace persuaded him to let them call together on Mrs. Stuart.

It was late for such visits, but no demer was made at admitting them. Hyacinth was alone in the small drawing-room with her little boy; she had thought the long string of callers ended, and rang for her little son. What a noble child he looked, dressed in velvet and point lace, with his mother's lovely eyes, and a look of his soldier-father about his mouth! The Duke and Max were old friends, so he took the boy on his knee, while Sir John greeted the beautiful widow.

They talked on many subjects. Both were well versed in all the topics of the day. The Duke chimed in; even little Max added his mite to the conversation. Sir John had thought Mrs. Stuart like his wife even in her rich, festive robes; but the resemblance was even more marked now, when she wore a simple embroidered muslin, such as Lady Hyacinth had particularly affected, with no ornaments or trimming except a broad sash.

"You are looking very fragile," said the Duke, with something more than friendly interest. "Mrs. Stuart, do you think London suits you?"

"I hardly know. This season has been my first acquaintance with it; but we are soon going away. The Earl promises Max a sight of his Yorkshire moors next week."

"Yorkshire," said his Grace, discontentedly; "I thought you would have gone abroad, or at least to some watering-place where one could meet you."

She smiled.

"I think we are all, then, a little homesick; I am tired of London. For my own part I should be content never to see it again."

"You prefer a country life?"

It was Sir John who addressed her.

"Yes; and I think it better for the child."

"The Towers is miles from any town; it is positively wicked of Lord Allerton to immure you there."

"But if I like to be immured?"

"It is incomprehensible."

"It is the simple truth; besides, the Towers is not so desolately situated as you suppose. We can drive to Whitby in two hours."

Sir John looked up quickly.

"Do you like Whitby, Mrs. Stuart?"

"I think it very beautiful."

The gentlemen took their leave, but his Grace of Carnegie was unusually silent as they walked down the walk.

"It's rather hard, John. I've scoffed at love all my life, and now that I'm harder hit than I thought possible it's all in vain."

"Are you sure?"

"I haven't put the formal question, but I feel sure of it. She's the fairest woman in London—the purest, the most true; but I have no more hope of winning her than if she were some far-off star."

"Nonsense!"

"It's true. Of course I shall ask her, but it's all useless."

"Do you fear a rival?"

"There's no man in London I fear unless it is myself."

"You must be mad! I have seen her only twice; we are perfect strangers."

"I am not mad; I know you are really strangers, but she thinks of you as her husband's dearest friend. To-night she blushed whenever she spoke to you. You might not see it, but I did. I tell you, Carlyle, I would have given my dukedom for such a token of her favour."

"Nonsense!" repeated the Baronet, "you are so jealous you distort things even to yourself."

Carnegie looked at his friend gravely; his brows were knitted, but he spoke more in sorrow than in anger.

"Do you believe in second sight?"

"I never thought about it. What is it?"

"The gift of being able to see future events years even before they come to pass."

"What rubbish! I beg your pardon, Carnegie, but it seems so to me. You see there is not a grain of superstition in my nature."

"There is a great deal in mine. I am half a Scotchman, you know; my childhood was spent over the border, and as long ago as I can remember anything I know my nurse told me I had second sight."

"Well?"

"I shut my eyes now, as we walk along, and I see before me you living in your own home. It is in Kent, and the gates open upon a wide common. Well, Jack, I see you in that house with a lady on your arm, and it is she—Queenie. She looks into your face with loving glances, you bend and kiss her, you bid her welcome home, you call her by the sacred name of wife!"

He had been standing quite still, his eyes closed, an expression of deep attention on his face. Slowly he opened his eyes, his features lost their dazed, dreary look—in a word, he came back to his usual manner.

Sir John stared.

"This is nothing but fancy."

"It is the sober truth."

"You ought not to give way to such feelings."

"I don't; they have no influence over me. I shall go to Mrs. Stuart to-morrow and plead my cause as passionately as man can plead it, but I know beforehand it will be hopeless."

"Carnegie, surely you do not think me base enough to have attempted to make myself agreeable to the object of your love?"

"I am sure you have not done so. I feel she will be your wife, something tells me so; and Jack, if I can never win her, there is no man in the world I would resign her to so willingly as yourself."

They parted, but the memory of that scene lingered long with Sir John. He himself considered Carnegie had little chance, and he was not surprised to receive a hurried note from him two days later.

"Have failed, am off to Norway. When my prophecy is fulfilled confess you were wrong to scoff at second sight."

But Sir John left London without another glimpse of Mrs. Stuart. The very moment he received the duke's note there came a telegram which filled him with dismay, for it told plainly of the danger of his dearest friend.

Kathleen Grant, Acacia Cottage, Elmer's End, to Sir John Carlyle, Clarges-street, W.—

"My husband is dying, his one desire is to see you. Oh! if you have any pity for us come at once."

He had never seen the Grants since his wedding-day. The artist was connected in his mind with Hyacinth, and perhaps that was the reason he had not sought him out on returning to England; but at the news of Arnold's danger the old affection welled up, warm and strong. In half-an-hour the Baronet was in the train for Elmer's End.

Acacia Cottage looked very dismal in the summer gloaming. Even before he knocked at the door Sir John told himself that things had gone badly with the artist. A benevolent-looking, elderly man opened the door; our Baronet marvelled whom he could be. He was not a gentleman, but surely the Grants' ma-

nage did not boast a man-servant? The elderly party's first words explained his doubts.

"Its forty-nine pounds, eight and fourpence, and the amount of the execution with costs and expenses; and if you're the gentleman they're looking to to help them I hope you mean to do it, for I'll be right glad to get out of this place. They say Mr. Grant is dying fast, and I should be sort of scared to be in possession where there was a corpse."

Sir John shuddered; he took out his purse. By a strange coincidence he had that day been to the bank to cash a substantial cheque; his purse was full of notes and gold.

"I will satisfy every claim," he said, promptly; "but let me have a light and send someone to tell Mrs. Grant I am here."

A gentleman entered with a candle, no doubt of his right to the title, though he was only a poor, hard-working doctor.

"Mr. Grant is sinking fast," he said to Sir John. "I have done my best, but with such distress, such poverty, everything was against him. It seems," went on the kind-hearted man, "he has not sold a picture for over a year; their savings were all gone, and they were too proud to write to friends."

"And Mrs. Grant?"

"She nursed him tenderly, but she is ill herself now."

"Ill?"

"There are three babies," went on the Doctor, "and the youngest is only a few hours' old."

Sir John's conduct was very simple; he put his purse into the doctor's hands.

"Will you kindly settle with this man, and send the servant for anything your patients need. I must go to my poor friend now."

Was that Arnold Grant, that gaunt, cadaverous-looking man, whose face was lined with furrows, whose hollow eyes could hardly brighten, even at the sight of his old friend!

"I came the moment I got your message. Oh, Arnold! why couldn't you let me know before?"

"I couldn't; Katy sent them, the secret was killing me. Oh, John! how I have wronged you!"

"Wronged me?" asked the Baronet, in great surprise. "I am sure you have been my best and truest friend."

"I wronged you—a word from me, and your wife would never have left you."

"Arnold!"

"Aye, I heard you were parted. I guessed the reason, but I would not speak. I was doing badly even then. I thought that you would turn to us in your loneliness, that I should be your travelling companion as I used to be, that my wife and babies would have a home at The Elms. Everything had failed with me, Jack. I was going from bad to worse, and I caught at this. I thought Lady Hyacinth once changed from you your home and purse would be ours."

Sir John felt troubled. He had cherished such faith and trust in Arnold Grant, had deemed him made of nobler stuff, and this was the end!

"It was gambling did it," went on the dying man. "I got to love cards and dice, and then it was all over with me. You may reclaim a drunkard, but a gambler never!"

He paused from sheer exhaustion.

"You sent for me," said Sir John, gently. "Tell me what I can do—tell me how I shall smooth your pathway to the grave."

"I want your forgiveness—your pardon, for having wrecked your life. A word from me and the estrangement between you and Lady Hyacinth would never have been."

"I believe that no one living knows the cause of that estrangement except myself," returned Sir John.

"Listen. There was an elderly lady living next door who had the charge of a little child, a baby boy. From time to time his mother came to visit him, but her name was never spoken. There was I know not what of mystery in her visits."

"Go on."

"Within a month of the last time she came here the news reached me that you had parted from your wife. I knew then that I had not been mistaken—that the mother of that nameless child was Lady Hyacinth Carlyle!"

"And that being so, how could a word from you or anyone else have changed things?"

"Your wife was young—almost a girl; she was a total stranger to London. What more likely than she should forget the name of the church where she was married?—that when you asked to see the certificate of her marriage she should have none to show? I argued this was the case; that with your passionate pride you would not take her unsupported word."

"I never thought of marriage," breathed Sir John; "it never crossed my mind."

"But she was married, and I, from mere curiosity, chancing to be in the church, witnessed the ceremony. Later on, when I was presented to your friends, I recognised her as the bride of that dull November morning. As once I distrusted her, I feared, wearying of her stolen choice, she had forsaken her husband for you. I went to the church, obtained a copy of the certificate; then I searched the papers, and found her husband's death. She deceived you in marrying you without telling you she had been both wife and mother; but she was pure and innocent in all else, as is the devoted girl in the next room, who, ere to-morrow's dawn, must be a widow."

Sir John fairly gasped. The perspiration stood on his forehead in great beads. He never doubted her. Oh, why had the truth come so late! Would that he had trusted his darling! Why, rather, that he had not condemned her unheard!

"Where is the church?" he asked, breathlessly; "and what was her husband's name? Arnold, tell me this, and I will bless your memory even now!"

The dying man opened his lips; but it was in vain. No sound escaped them. Sir John pealed the bell, and the doctor came up. He gave one glance at Arnold's wasted face, and said, reverently,—

"Heaven help the poor creature he leaves behind him! Oh, Sir John, how am I to tell that poor young mother she is a widow and her babies fatherless?"

CHAPTER XII. AND LAST.

SIR JOHN CARLYLE went downstairs from his friend's deathbed into the deserted parlour. How forlorn and desolate the room looked! It was but too evident that it had been stripped of all that made it bright and homelike—that every portable article of any value had been disposed of to procure the necessities of life.

But the baronet heeded nothing of all this. He closed the door, and leaning one arm upon the table he wept like a little child. Some of his tears were for the friend of his youth, who, with many gifts and talents, had sunk to such an end as this; but the greater part were for his wife—the sweet, true-hearted girl whom he had pronounced a sinner without giving her one chance to clear herself. If he could have undone the past by the sacrifice of his health and strength, ay, of years of his life, he would have blotted it out at any cost—at any labour.

He never doubted Arnold's confession. He would fain have heard the name of the church where his Hyacinth became a wife—fain have been told her husband's name; not that he wanted proof, but for a nobler, tenderer reason. It seemed to him he would give very, very much to claim her child, to bring him up as his own son. Sir John felt, somehow, as if his wife would understand his bitter sorrow—his anguish of remorse if, looking down from Heaven, she could see her boy in his arms.

But Arnold Grant's confession had not thrown any light upon the past. Miss Johnson, Hyacinth's confidante, was dead. There

seemed no one in the world likely to help the baronet in his search for the little child he had once hated and despised. No one—stay! Dr. Warburton, who knew so much of Hyacinth's story, who had so heartily espoused her cause, he surely knew the name of her first husband. Sir John felt overwhelmed. The physician had received him coldly, but when he heard his story—when he knew the terrible mistake which had wrecked his life—he would be more compassionate.

Sir John felt better. He was one of those men who, when once they have resolved on a course of future action, feel stronger to bear the sorrow which has come to them. He had made up his mind now, and putting his own grief from him, he could think of the misery of the little family at Ascott Cottage. Riding he went to the parlour-door to meet Dr. Pemberton on the threshold.

The latter tendered back his purse.

"I could almost envy you your wealth, Sir John," he said, gravely, "it has so much power to alleviate suffering. The man in possession has departed, the nurse has gone into Beckenham for a supply of food, the children have been fed. It is like a magician's wand, and it has all been done for fifty pounds."

Sir John replied,—

"Money will not do everything, Doctor, how am I to help Mrs. Grant? Her husband was my great friend; I would do all in my power for her."

The doctor threw up his hands.

"It's a sad business, Sir John. I don't see that she can earn her own living tied down as she is by three babies, and her husband has left nothing behind him but debts."

The baronet was very thoughtful for a moment; then he said, slowly,—

"Have you any idea what they amount to?"

"Nearly a hundred. Poor Grant used to go over the figures in his delirium till the amount got burnt into my brain."

"You have known them some time?"

"Three years almost."

"I wonder if you would mind devoting a few hours to their service?"

"I fear it would not do them much good."

"I think so. If you would undertake the responsibility of collecting a list of all Mr. Grant's bills I would gladly send a cheque for the amount. I am an idle man, and I ought to manage this without troubling you, but I have urgent private reasons for wishing to get to Yorkshire as soon as possible."

The man of physic smiled.

"You are rarely generous?"

"No; I am a rich man, and I have neither wife nor child. I noticed, as I drove up, that this house was to be sold. I think I had better purchase it, and let Mrs. Grant be my tenant. Of course I shall not expect any rent. Then if I give her two or three hundred pounds I think it would last until she could turn herself round. She might take boarders, or even begin a little school."

"It is more than many brothers would do for her."

"Is it? If I had a wife I might take them all home for a year or two, but I am a lonely man. I think my plan is best. Of course, if she can't get on I must allow her a little income. Will you let me send you a cheque? Dr. Pemberton could manage things for me."

"Do you know I am an utter stranger, and might cheat you?"

"I am not afraid," and shaking hands they parted.

The next evening Dr. Pemberton found a letter from Sir John. It was very short and simple. Two cheques were enclosed—one for five hundred pounds, the other for eighty guineas. In a few well-chosen words Sir John begged the doctor to apply the first to the necessities and liabilities of Mrs. Grant and her family; the latter he ventured to ask him to accept in payment of the bills which, "I feel sure, even if sent in, can never have been paid, and the loss of time which, I fear,

must be the result of your assisting me in this manner."

Dr. Pemberton showed the second cheque to his wife.

"I have no manner of claim to it, Nellie, but I don't like to send it back. He has put it so delicately the most sensitive man would not be offended."

Her eyes glistened. She had six little children, and their income was very slender.

"Don't you think we might keep it, Tom? This quarter has been such a heavy one, and we wanted a few other pounds so much. This cheque seems to have come straight from Heaven."

They kept it; and I don't think any part of Sir John's vast wealth ever brought greater happiness to its recipients than did that eighty guinea.

Sir John himself went back to London. He would fain have started the very next morning for Whitby, but he was prevented by a sudden attack of illness. For three weeks he was unable to leave his room. Then, pale and thin, with the marks of recent suffering on his face, he went to the east coast, and put up, as before, at the Royal Hotel.

As he sat over his breakfast the next day he just glanced at the visitors' list.

It was August, the month when Whitby is at its best, and he saw many familiar names; but the entry which struck him most was a short paragraph, announcing that the Earl of Allerton and the Hon. Mrs. Stuart and son had arrived at the Royal.

"Here, in this very house! How strange! Poor Carnegie! I wonder if he is getting over his disappointment?"

Warned by his former experiences, Sir John waited to call upon Dr. Warburton until he saw the physician's brougham deposit its master at the gate. Five minutes later he knocked at the door.

The same page appeared, and recognised the visitor of six months ago; but the baronet conquered his scruples by slipping half-a-sovereign into his hand, and so Dr. Warburton was summoned to his study to see the man he most despised.

"Sir John, I wonder at your persisting in forcing yourself upon my notice. It is not the action of a gentleman."

But the baronet turned to him with a broken voice.

"Bear with me. I have only just learned the truth. I know now that my wife was true in thought and deed, but I was miserably deceived. I jumped to a conclusion, and in my jealous fury I gave her no opportunity of clearing herself."

The doctor listened attentively as Sir John went on. As the whole story was laid bare before him he gathered a little of what the proud man had suffered, and his tone became more genial.

"It is a thousand pities Mr. Grant did not make this communication to you before."

"Aye. It would have changed my whole life."

"It would not have kept your wife here if Heaven had appointed for her to die."

"You don't understand," breathlessly. "She would have died in my arms. I should have heard her last words, seen her last smile. Dr. Warburton, you have judged me hardly, but you have no conception of the love I bore my wife. She was my life, my idol. I tell you I would sacrifice all I have in the world if it could bring her back to me only for one half-hour—if I could just hear her sweet voice murmur that she forgave me."

There was no mistaking his earnestness.

Dr. Warburton was lost in thought. Barely half-an-hour ago Hyacinth had quitted him; he knew she had gone straight to that lonely grave in the churchyard, which, though it bore her own name, contained the remains of her who had been almost mother to her.

A strange fancy struck him. Why should these two who loved each other be parted? Why should he not attempt their reunion? Perhaps Hyacinth still lingered by that grave;



[“WELL, JACK, I SEE YOU IN THAT HOUSE WITH A LADY ON YOUR ARM, AND IT IS SHE, QUEENIE!”]

he would send her husband there. If they met, surely all that had divided them must be explained!

“They say the spirits of the departed still watch over those they loved,” said the Doctor, with great feeling. “If you speak your love and your remorse by your wife’s grave it will surely reach her pure spirit where she is. Her grave has not been neglected, Sir John; it is bright with summer flowers. I should like you to see it.”

Sir John wrung his hand. He left the room and turned his steps towards the churchyard, taking the winding path which led to the spot where rested all that was mortal of his wife.

But surely he was mistaken? A slim, white-robed figure knelt over the grave, picking the withered leaves from a fair climbing rose.

Sir John started. At first he thought it was his wife’s spirit there. He remembered that Mrs. Stuart was at Whitby, and recalled her extraordinary resemblance to Hyacinth.

He would have retreated, but the girl rose suddenly, and they stood face to face.

To Hyacinth there came the one idea—Dr. Warburton had betrayed her. There was a look of tenderness on her husband’s face which made her hope. She breathed but one word,—

“John.”

He stood as in a dream. Was it his wife—his Hyacinth—whom he believed sleeping beneath that turf, or was it the fair woman who so marvellously resembled her?

“Dr. Warburton has told you?” she said, looking at him with misty eyes. “I see it in your face. Oh! John, I did it for the best, I did, indeed!”

His arms were round her in a moment, her head rested on his shoulder. What though the gravestone before them bore her name, Sir John recked nothing. He had room but for one thought, one joy. This was his

wife, his Hyacinth, given back to him, as it were, from the grave.

Who shall say in what words she told him of her generous sacrifice, or how he broke to her the cruel doubts he had cherished, which only Arnold Grant’s confession had dispelled? I only know they talked long and earnestly, and that when they left the churchyard her hand rested on his arm.

He had much to learn—how his darling and the beautiful widow who seemed to him her image were one and the same; how the heir of Allerton was her son!

“Hyacinth, you must come home.”

She shook her head.

“Are you afraid to trust me? My darling, I have treated you cruelly, but you need have no fears for the future.”

“It is not that.”

“What then, sweetheart?”

And she told him that awful doubt, whether, having been married in her maiden name instead of that of Stuart, she had ever been his true wife at all.

The thought made them grave and anxious, but after all it could not change their happiness.

They loved each other. Another ceremony would set aside all doubts of their first marriage, and the only creature who would really have suffered from the doubt was safe from all such things. No legal flaw in her mother’s marriage could hurt little Nan among the angels.

In the fair September days Sir John Carlyle married Hyacinth Dacre, widow of Maxwell Stuart.

Their story never leaked out to the world at large. Dr. Warburton, Colonel Delaval, the Earl of Allerton, and a young couple in a quiet Sussex rectory knew the truth; others only remark on the great resemblance between Sir John’s second wife and the ill-fated Lady Hyacinth.

The present mistress of The Elms is a

beautiful, gracious woman, full of love and tenderness—of sympathy and compassion. She is always addressed as Lady Carlyle; Lord Allerton calls her Anne, Sir John says Queenie.

People thought it a delicate compliment to her predecessor that when a little daughter was born to her she called her Hyacinth.

More than two years have passed since Sir John found his wife. The Grants still live at Elmer’s End, and are getting on bravely; the Duke of Carnegie is still abroad, and Mr. and Mrs. Yorke have since paid long visits to The Elms, where Dr. Warburton is a prime favourite with both Sir John and his wife.

The old Earl has gone to his rest now, and little Max is Lord Allerton, but he is too young yet fully to appreciate his honours. He adores his mother, and is a special pet with his stepfather.

He is very fond of his baby-sister, and has already been taught to strew fragrant flowers over a little grave in Red Cross churchyard.

Sir John has ceased to regret his first-born. Dearly as they loved her, he and her mother both feel thankful little Nan is safe in Heaven. They feel she was taken from them in May-time, as the tender head would have been meted out the punishment of Hyacinth’s error.

[THE END.]

CATCHING THE TRAIN.—Hurry to or from trains should in all cases be avoided. It is dangerous to the healthy habitual traveller as well as the invalid. Many a one has suffered permanent dilatation of the heart in hurrying to catch a train; many a one has dropped down dead from the same cause. Hurry in catching trains tends to weakness of the nervous system, to indigestion, and to heart disease, to say nothing of the risk of catching cold from sitting down in the carriage heated, in cases where the person has to walk quickly instead of riding.



[HE COULD NOT TELL THAT HER TEARS WERE CAUSED BY THE SHAME AT THE THOUGHT OF THAT KISS.]

NOVELLETTE.]

A FALSE FRIEND.

CHAPTER I.

Rock Mount was an old-fashioned dwelling place, situated amid timbered hills and well-wooded slopes, and immediately surrounded by an overgrown quaint garden, at the bottom of which flowed the Doil River, a turbulent, quick-rushing stream, which occasionally, at times of high flood, rose and overflowed part of the garden, doing considerable damage to the plants, vegetables, and flowers. Fortunately this was not of frequent occurrence; and though strangers looked upon it as rather unpleasant, not one of the family did, unless it was Mrs. Travers, who, being somewhat of a disappointed woman, seized upon every opportunity with avidity to grumble at what she termed her hard lot, and make the lives of her near relatives as thorny and uncomfortable as she possibly could.

Mr. Travers and his children, Willie and Annette, regarded the floods with praiseworthy equanimity, and declared that the shrubs looked greener, and the fruit grew more luxuriantly after them. To this the mistress of Rock Mount would never agree, and declared that altogether it was a wretched place, hardly fit for human habitation, and only paupers would live there. This was a sweeping assertion and not strictly true, for though the house was not very commodious or of imposing appearance, nevertheless there was an air of solid, old-fashioned respectability about it, and it was picturesque enough to please most people whose ideas were not warped by fruitless dreams of ambition and bitter reverses.

The back of the house looked on to the rocky hill, from which it derived its name, and which sheltered it from the keen northern blasts. It was built of grey lichen-tinted

stone, with many-paned windows, a heavy oaken door and a projecting porch, which was covered in spring and summer with wreaths of pink and white may and clusters of perfuming roses. A gravelled walk led down to a miniature lake, where the great glistening leaves of the water-plants were floating on the surface, sheltering the gold and silver fish and the fat carp when the sunrays became too fierce, and all around was a bewildering mass of sweet-smelling early bloom. A rustic Paradise some folks would have dubbed it, but not so Letitia Travers, as she stood in the oaken porch, a gloomy frown on her still handsome, though somewhat faded face, and discontented look in her blue eyes, which in youth must have been a serious drawback to her claim to good looks, owing to their hardness and want of expression, which counterbalanced her small, regular features and delicate complexion.

"A hovel, with a wilderness round it!" she muttered, bitterly, gazing at the lower part of her domain, which showed signs of a recent irruption of the babbling, turbulent river, which had broken down the bushes and swept away the earth. "Was there ever such a miserable place?"

"A great many considerably worse, mother," said a young man, who came out and stood beside her, with a gay laugh.

"I mean for people of our birth and position," she rejoined, with an immense assumption of dignity.

"And so do I," he returned.

"We ought to be living, if we had our rights, in a modern country mansion, with all the little elegances of life around us."

"And what are our rights?" demanded her son, quizzically.

"The rights of blue blood," she answered, proudly.

"Blue blood is of no use, mother, nor blood so thick that it won't circulate through one's veins unless there is money to back it, and our

pockets are singularly empty." He tapped his significantly as he spoke.

"I know it," snapped Mrs. Travers, quickly, "and they are never likely to be full from any help we get from our children."

"You want so much, mother," he expostulated.

"And you do so little," she retorted.

"What can I do?" he queried, a shade on his bright face; for though he idled somewhat in the fine months, helping his father with the garden, the cow and the chickens, he worked hard with his pencil in the winter designing Christmas cards, etching on fans, painting on satin, and doing many things of that kind, which brought grieve to the well-nigh empty mill.

"Work harder!" she snapped again. "Then you might be able to give me some of the luxuries and comforts I languish for."

"I hardly think I should be able to do that. I was not brought up in a way that was conducive to money-making."

"I know that. Your father spoiled you, and meant to spoil you more by putting you in the army."

"You used not to think it would spoil me."

"Possibly not. I am wiser now, and think all male children should be educated in a useful, as well as ornamental way."

"I wonder whether I am ornamental?"

"Besides," she continued, not deigning to notice his frivolous remark, "things are very much changed with us."

"They are, indeed," agreed Willie, with a sigh.

"When your father destined you for the army he was a man of wealth and position, and he would have been able to give you a liberal allowance to supplement your pay."

"Of course!" he agreed again.

"I fully approved of his choice of a profession then, for I did not know," she added, with exceeding bitterness, "that he meant to

make a fool of himself, and speculate all his substance away."

"He was not foolish," said the son, gently, "only unfortunate."

"I maintain that he was foolish," declared the wife determinedly. "Ay, and worse than foolish—culpable."

"Oh, mother!"

"Yes, culpable. A man with a wife and family has no right to put his money into risky ventures."

"He did it for our sakes, hoping to double it," and the young man might have added, "and to give you the numerous luxuries and comforts for which you craved and clamoured so loudly," but he magnanimously refrained.

"And lost all."

"Not quite all."

"What is two hundred a year?"

"It keeps us from starvation."

"Ay," she said grimly, "in a hole like this."

"I don't think it a bad hole."

"I pity your taste."

"Especially as we got it rent free."

"Would a hovel like that," nodding at the old grey house, "be worth rent?"

"Certainly. Keith would get thirty or forty pounds a year for it with the garden."

"Fool!"

"He would indeed, and I think it most kind of him to let us have it for nothing—gratis in the extreme."

"He might have been generous to a greater degree while he was about it, and have given us a better place."

"In fact, mother," said the young man, with another quizzical glance at his maternal parent, "you would like Drummond Royal itself."

"To be sure I should," she responded immediately.

"And ten thousand a year to keep it up?"

"Exactly."

"Well, I hardly think Keith will feel inclined to part with his beautiful home and his income."

"Nor I, unless—"

"Unless what?" asked Willie, as she hesitated.

"Unless something I have thought of comes to pass."

"And what is that?" he demanded, with an uneasy glance at her. Mrs. Travers's plans were not always, strictly speaking, quite to his liking.

"You will know in good time," she returned, composedly. "Are you not going for a walk?" she continued, which was as much as to say that the conference, as far as she was concerned, was at an end.

"Yes."

"Then you had better go, and don't be late for tea," at which speech he whistled for his dog, and quickly disappeared in the dim recesses of a neighbouring wood, while the chataine of Rock Mount paced up and down between the beds of nodding daffodils, primroses, and purple violets, revolving certain schemes in her mind, which, if successful, would reinstate her in the position from which her husband's unlucky speculations had hurled her.

Twenty-three years before, when she, a blooming belle of twenty summers, had married Gordon Travers, then a captain in a line regiment, he was possessed of some two thousand a-year, which, though an excellent income in these hard days, proved insufficient for him after his marriage. He left the army, as his fair and exacting spouse grumbled at the frequent change of quarters, and the fatigue of dragging two children about with her from place to place, and settled down in a fashionable part of London, living in great style, and making a dashing show amongst the *beau monde*.

For a time his income bore the strain, and then he found it would be necessary to retrench—a proceeding which Letitia Travers decidedly objected to; and urged on by her grumbling he speculated, hoping to make a

fortune, and lost all he possessed save two hundred a-year, which was secured to his wife by their marriage settlement. In the midst of his distress and agony, his nephew, child of his elder brother, who had taken the name of Drummond on having been left a fortune and an estate, came forward and offered him Rock Mount as a residence till he could get something better, or as long as he liked to occupy it, and the ruined man eagerly accepted the offer, and thither he removed with the scanty remnants of his fortune.

To him the change, though hard, was not so dreadful. He loved the country, he had his children to console him, and he was a man of a singularly placid and amiable disposition.

To her it was horrible, a sort of living death. She liked gaiety, the haunts of fashion, the compliments of the idle butterflies that flit about the *luxe monde*, and fine clothes, and loathed the dull, uneventful life at Rock Mount.

"For six years I have endured it," she muttered, as she paced up and down, "for six years without break or change, and now I feel that I can bear with the dullness of this place but a little while longer. Annette is seventeen, the time is ripe. She must and shall rescue me from this horrible life. My youth is past, my prime is wasting. I must make haste and escape once more to that world which is congenial to my tastes and feelings. If not soon my good looks will have vanished entirely," and entering the house, she went into the parlour and studied her reflection in the mirror with considerable attention.

She bore her forty-three years remarkably well. There was not a single grey hair in the flaxen braids, nor a single line about the firm mouth or hard eyes. Her complexion, like that of most very fair women, was slightly faded, but a touch of rouge would, she knew, freshen it up marvellously. Then her figure was as lithe and upright as any girl's of eighteen, and her bust delicately rounded. In smart gowns, very different from the common black twill she wore, she would still be a very attractive woman, and she meant to attract in a wider circle than that which her present abode afforded; and primed with this thought she attacked her husband when he came in to tea, as they were alone, Willie not having returned from his walk, and Annette spending the evening with some friends.

"What do you think I found to-day, Gordon?" she commenced, as she handed him his tea, and pushed a dish of eggs towards him.

"I don't know," he rejoined, somewhat listlessly, lifting his head and looking at her.

He was only ten years his wife's senior, but he might have been thirty. His luxurious hair was silvery white, his dark eyes sunken, with heavy lines beneath, and his skin of a peculiar, almost unearthly pallor, under all the sun-tan, while on his lips was the saddest of sad expressions, reflected in the sunken eyes with mournful intensity. If she loudly bewailed their misfortunes it was plainly evident that he silently did likewise, and that the blow had struck home.

"Well, guess, can't you?"

"I am not good at guessing. Tell me, my dear."

"A description of The Royal when old Sinclair Drummond wanted to sell it and put it in the papers."

"Ah! It was a good thing for his son that he died before he could carry out his plans."

"Yes indeed, and for Keith, or he wouldn't be master there now."

"And for us," murmured Gordon Travers. "Just listen how grand it sounds," and she read out in her clear, mellow tones, "The fine country seat known as Drummond Royal, handsomely furnished, to be sold, in the centre of the Doil Hunt, containing magnificent entrance hall, with gallery, spacious drawing, dining and morning rooms, billiard and smoking rooms, splendidly appointed library, private chapel with organ, twenty bed and

dressing-rooms, commodious domestic offices, extensive orchards and kitchen garden, vinerias, peach-house, conservatories, mushroom house, melon pits, fine stables, coach-house and kennels, several cottages and ten acres of meadow land, right over a grouse-moor, and 2,000 acres mixed shooting, preserved fishing for five miles, rabbit warren, good country society, three miles from station, etc.' What a place to possess. Happy man he that possesses it."

"Yes, he ought to be."

"What do you mean by 'ought to be'?" she queried, casting a quick glance at her husband.

"Well, he isn't, you know."

"Then he ought to be. Ten thousand a-year and that place is enough for earthly happiness."

"Money isn't everything, my love."

"It is a good deal in this world."

"True. Still there are some things it can't purchase. Health, for instance."

"Keith doesn't want that. He is strong enough."

"Then happiness. He is not perfectly happy."

"Do you mean to tell me that at thirty-seven he is still regretting the woman who jilted him when he was twenty-two?"

"Yes."

"Then he isn't the wise man I took him to be."

"Possibly not. Some men don't easily get over the breakdown of their first love affair."

"He has plenty to console him for the loss of a worthless woman, for she must have been worthless to jilt a man who was heir to such a place," added Mrs. Travers, sapiently.

"Do you think so?" Mr. Travers glanced at her curiously as he spoke.

"I do. But it seems to me that he has been more lively of late."

"Yes. I think he likes being able to come in here at any time and have a chat."

"Yes, so do I."

"He is fond of his relatives, and doesn't care for strangers."

"There is one of his relatives for whom I wish he would develop any amount of love."

"Which one do you mean?" queried her husband, with a puzzled look.

"Annette!"

"Annette!"

"Yes. Your daughter. It would be a fine thing for her to be mistress of Drummond Royal."

"That child!"

"That child was seventeen last month. Quite a marriageable age."

"But—but—they are first cousins!"

"But me no buts. What of that? If he proposes to her you surely won't be mad enough to refuse your consent on that score?"

"I don't know. I haven't thought about it," he replied, rising and pushing away his untasted cup.

"Then you had better think of it, Gordon; for, unless I am very much mistaken, Keith's altered looks are owing to his growing affection for our child."

"You may be mistaken."

"I think not," rejoined his wife, as he left the room.

CHAPTER II.

THE woods around Rock Mount were ringing with the songs of the wild birds. One morning, a week later, as Annette Travers came slowly through them, her hands, and the skirt of her dress, which she held up with difficulty, were full of blue-bells, scarlet arums, homely hyacinths, purple violets, that matched in colour her beautiful eyes, soft sulphur-hued primroses, surrounded by their tender crumpled leaves, golden daffodils, and a heap of other spring blooms.

Many girls would have hesitated ere they lifted a dainty cambric gown to hold the goodly woodland spoil, but not so Annette. Though seventeen summers had passed over

her fair head, she was still in most things utterly childlike and simple. Flowers with her were a passion, and she thought nothing of the gown, and everything of being able to carry home enough blossoms to deck every vase and bowl she could find in her home.

So there she was, with her skirts gathered up as a little child might have them, strolling slowly through the budding woods, stopping every now and then to listen to the ringing note of the finch, as it sang its bright challenge, or the soft coo of the wood-pigeon, or the mellow thrill of the blackbird, that came along, borne murmurously on the balmy air.

It was twilight there, though ever and anon a shaft of sunlight would pierce the branches, casting chequered patches of brilliance on the mossy carpet, and play upon the girl's brown head, gilding the wavy tresses with a metallic sheen, adding to their natural beauty.

Eagerly she drank in the sights and sounds around her. The delicate green tracery of the opening buds, the bushy-tailed, black-eyed squirrels scampering from tree to tree, the gaudy-plumaged jays flying overhead with their discordant "tehare, tehare," the warm, soft-scented air, the smell of pines, and the heavy perfume of the pink may.

"I could stay here for ever," she murmured, ecstatically. "It is so lovely this morning, but then it should always be spring, and that couldn't be. What a goose I am," and with a rippling laugh she tripped on at a quicker pace, and soon reached the Mount.

"Where is William?" demanded Mrs. Travers—she never condescended to call her son, as others did, "Willie."

"He is with Keith," answered Annette.

"With Keith! Is he coming here? Have you seen him this morning?" she asked quickly, throwing a sharp look at the girl, who, intent on arranging her flowers in a huge bowl, merely said—

"Yes," without looking up.

"Coming here, you say? and to breakfast?"

"Yes, he said he was coming, and of course I couldn't say don't. It doesn't matter, does it?"

"Matter! Of course not, I always am delighted to see the dear boy (Mrs. Travers invariably called him "a boy," and spoke in extravagantly affectionate terms of him to her daughter), and to-day more than ever," which was quite true, for she had been revolving certain schemes in her mind, and was burning to put them into execution. "Fetch the preserves from the pantry. The strawberry, you know, is his favourite, and tell Deans we must have some cream, and a pot of her best butter," and bustling about with a will she soon had the table looking smart and more plentifully spread, and was ready to welcome Keith Drummond when he came in.

"Hope I'm not in the way, aunt," he said, dutifully stooping to kiss the cheek which she presented to him.

"Not at all, my dear," she returned, in cordial and very different tones from those in which she addressed her own family. "I am sure I need not tell you that you are always most welcome, come when you may, and the oftener you come the better we shall like it."

"Thanks," he murmured gratefully, though he had received the same assurance dozens of times before. "I feel lonely sometimes, up at the Royal."

"Of course you do," she agreed urbanely. "more especially at breakfast, which is a meal requiring a woman to preside at it to make it homelike and comfortable."

"Just so," he assented, and unconsciously his eyes travelled to Annette, who, like Werter's "Charlotte," was cutting bread-and-butter, and rested there.

"Large houses are always dreary," struck in Mr. Travers; "unless inhabited by large families."

"I think they are," and the owner of the large house stopped, looking at the daughter, and looked at the father.

Uncle and nephew were singularly alike. Both tall, broad-shouldered men, with dark eyes, straight, clear-cut features, and heavy, drooping moustaches.

The likeness was intensified by the look of melancholy on either face, and it seemed that in a few years, when the dark locks of the younger man became frosted with the snows of Time, that he would become the exact counterpart of the older one.

Both had suffered, and through women. One had gained his heart's desire, and was wretched—the other had lost it, and was wretched.

Fete had smiled on neither, and life was nearly over with its trials and troubles for Gordon Travers. The future could hold little or nothing good in store for him. It might for Keith Drummond, and so he thought, as he sat and looked at Annette, with the morning sunbeams weaving a golden web amid her soft hair, and lighting up the violet depths of her large eyes.

"Put this round your neck," ordered Mrs. Travers, when breakfast was finished, and Annette prepared to sally out and visit the chicks and the ducklings, and the gold fish and sundry other pets.

"It will make me so hot, mother," she expostulated, eyeing the cambric handkerchief unfavourably.

"Never mind. I wish you to wear it," and not being used to disobey her mother she took and pinned it round her snowy throat.

"I wish that child would not run about in such a wild fashion," bewailed Mrs. Travers, when she was left alone in the quaint old parlour with Keith, preparing to open the campaign.

"Why not?"

"Her hands are dreadfully brown, her neck is beginning to scorch, and her face will be freckled."

"That won't matter, aunt; freckles are a sign of health."

"They don't matter in the country, but it is different in town."

"Annette is not in town."

"Not at present," returned the arch-conspirator, taking up an elaborate piece of work and stitching at it diligently. "When she does go there it will not do for her to appear with a coarse, red face."

"She would never have that; her skin is too fine."

"She would look coarse amongst the pale faces of the London belles."

"She may never have to undergo that test."

"She will have the opportunity of undergoing it very soon."

"What do you mean, aunt?" The master of Drummond Royal lifted his head, and regarded her intently.

"My sister, Mrs. Murray, wrote to me yesterday, asking if I would let Annette go to her, and stay with her for the season."

"And what have you said?" his tone was full of anxiety.

"I have not answered yet," she replied.

"There is the letter"—handing him an epistle which her sister had written at her request.

"She lives in Belgravia, is very pressing, and it would be an immense advantage for my poor child. Lina knows so many nice people."

As a matter of fact, Mrs. Murray lived in a small house in Piccadilly, into which she could not possibly have squeezed another person, as she had a large and ever-increasing family of her own, and her acquaintances lay amongst the shabby-genteel class.

Still she was quite ready to help her sister, and had done so to the best of her ability, having sent a most pressing invitation, which she well knew would never be accepted.

"What do you mean to do?" asked Keith again, as he finished perusing the letter and laid it down, with a hand that trembled somewhat, despite his efforts to steady it.

"I—I—hardly know," replied his aunt, with affected hesitation, keeping a furtive eye on him as she spoke. "She ought to go, I feel that. Seventeen—and she has seen no society

—had none of the advantages of mixing with the great world. We are so poor, this may be her only chance; ought I to refuse it?" She looked at her companion, but he gave no answer, so went on,—"She is very lonely, is she not; or am I partial?"

"She is most beautiful," he said then with fervour.

"And probably would receive a good proposal. You know she must marry well, for we have nothing to leave the poor child, and I should not rest easy in my grave if I do not leave her in some good man's care."

"You mean—to—send—her—to—your sister's?"

"That rests with you, dear Keith."

"How?" he asked, hoarsely.

"You know our straitened means," she continued, glibly. "Can you, will you lend me sufficient to get her a suitable outfit for her *debut*, and to launch her on the world of fashion, to take her chance amid town-bred beauties?"

Mrs. Travers not unfrequently borrowed from her nephew, and always forgot to pay him, he liberally responding to her demands, but she was not surprised when he said "No" to this demand.

"You—you—think she ought not to go," she faltered.

"I do."

"Why?"

"Because I love her," he said, rising and facing the woman who had plotted and planned and longed for this answer, "and because I cannot give that to you which may enable some other man to win what I long for and prize beyond anything else on earth. If you want her to marry well give her to me. I will guard and cherish her as no mere stranger could. This affection is the slow growth of the last six years. My life has been a sad one, but now—now I see a chance of such happiness as I have never dreamed of. Give her to me, aunt—give her to me, I beseech you," he implored.

"My dear Keith, you quite take my breath away," she murmured, holding her handkerchief to her face that he might not see the look of triumph that overspread it. "You surely can't mean this?"

"I do most solemnly. If Annette will not become my wife—if you and uncle will not give her to me—no other woman shall reign at Drummond Royal. My home and my heart will be bare and empty. Oh! have you not seen it?" he went on, vehemently. "Have you not seen that this young life mingling with mine has driven away bitter regret and unavailing sorrow, has given me hope and strength and energy, an object in life—something to live for, to dream of—has swept away the blank desolation which another woman's treachery caused?"

"I certainly have noticed that you have appeared to be in better spirits of late," she admitted, with seeming reluctance.

"And now you know the reason of it."

"Are you certain Annette is the reason of it?" asked Mrs. Travers, doubtfully.

She felt she could afford to throw obstacles in the way of such an ardent wooer, and that do what she might her prey was safe, her fish firmly hooked.

"I am certain, positive," he answered, eagerly.

"You may be mistaken," continued the skilful angler. "You may mistake your feelings. She is such a simple, child-like creature. What is there about her to win the love of a man such as yourself?"

"Everything," he answered, enthusiastically. "Youth, beauty, a sweet disposition, a charming manner, a ready sympathy with the sorrows of others. To me she is more charming, far more charming, than the most finished belle could possibly be."

"She is a sweet child," acknowledged the mother, shedding a crocodile tear. "To part with her will be a sad trial."

"Don't call it parting," expostulated the lover. "The Royal is so near here. You can

see her every day, and it will be far better than marrying her to one of those London men you were speaking of, whose homes are at a distance."

"True," agreed his companion. "Still, I don't know what her father will say. She is his favourite."

"I dread his refusal. But I trust he will not be cruel to me. Should he refuse me now others will come wooing in the future. He cannot hope to keep her with him always."

"True," agreed his aunt again, with a dolorous sigh; "and I think he would rather give her to you than to a stranger."

"I trust so. When shall I consult him? I must have his full permission before I breathe a word of love to Annette."

"Certainly. You have never given her a hint of your feelings, I suppose?"

"Never."

"Well, if Gordon does consent you must be prepared for some shyness and reluctance on her part. She knows nothing of love and lovers."

"So much the better, aunt. I shall not take her first no."

"Nor her second, if you wish to win her."

"I shall have a world of patience if I see the least chance of her yielding to me."

"That is right."

"And about seeing uncle?"

"He is in the study now. You can go and consult him," and Keith waited for no second bidding, but hurried off to the untidy, littered room, where his elderly counterpart sat, surrounded by unpaid bills and account books, looking more worried and sad than usual, for duns were pressing and money scarce.

The proposal came as a sort of shock to Gordon Travers at first, though he was better prepared for it than he would have been by his wife's hints. Still, it seemed to him that Annette was yet a child, and unfitted to take upon her young shoulders the cares and responsibilities of matrimony.

After a while, as he listened to the pleadings of the young man, he began to think that it would be both a desirable and natural match for his daughter. He was deeply attached to his kinsman, whom he knew possessed sterling qualities, and was certain to make a devoted husband, and then his darling would be near him.

He could see her often in her beautiful home; and, though he was far from worldly or avaricious, he was fully alive to the advantages of such a marriage for a young girl situated as Annette was. Her future had often troubled him. Now she would be amply provided for, and a staunch friend secured to his son by a closer tie than that of mere consanguinity.

Notwithstanding all these advantages, however, he stipulated that Annette's acceptance must come from herself, be of her own free will, and that no pressure should be put on her—to which Keith at once agreed, saying that he wished to win a willing bride, not a reluctant one, and then, armed with his uncle's permission, he went to find Annette and plead his cause.

CHAPTER III.

He had not very far to go. As he stepped from under the projecting porch he saw her standing by the miniature lake throwing crumbs to the gold fish. She held her large shady hat by its blue ribbons, and the bright sun-rays streamed down on the brown head and faultless skin, showing its flawless smoothness.

He walked slowly down the path, watching her, his mind a tumult of varied emotions. He had not known, until his aunt spoke of her marrying someone else, how powerful his love for her was. Would his deep devotion win a return? Would she come to him, and be enshrined in his heart—give her precious life into his keeping? All the passion and intensity of a strong nature was roused. He

longed to put the question, and yet dreaded the answer.

He was not vain. He had none of that presumptuous hope in which a younger man would have indulged, and he knew Annette to be too guileless and innocent to set store by his great worldly possessions. She would care for him for himself or not at all.

He might woo, as far as she individually was concerned, as a penniless pauper with an equal chance of success as in his rightful character of Master of Drummond Royal.

His fate hung upon a single word—the whole happiness of the rest of his life upon a little "yes." And yet—and yet, if she refused? If his almost insane joy, his great hopes, were disappointed, his future rendered a ruined, broken thing, his maturer days spoiled as his youth had been—by a woman?

Of course there would be a difference. One had accepted him and his heartfelt devotion with smiles and wiles, and soft tender coquetry had led him on to look upon her as the one with whom all his days would be spent; and then, when he had grown accustomed to her—when she had twined herself, as it were, into the very centre of his being—had grown to look to her for every joy, had jilted him twenty-four hours before their wedding-day, running away with a man who had a title tacked on to his name, and a few more thousands at his bankers.

That was not likely to happen again. Annette was above such sordid conduct. Still in her innocence she might deal him a heavy blow, from which he would not easily recover.

"Well, Keith," she said, turning to him as he joined her, "have you finished your chat with dad?"

"Yes."

"And now you can come with me. I am going to the woods. They are so lovely. Come."

"Not now, Annette."

"Why not?"

"I have something serious to say to you."

"Can't you say it there?" she asked, with childlike unconsciousness of the tremor in his voice, the agitation of his manner.

"No; I will say it here," and, taking her hand, he drew her into a rustic arbour, the greenery of which concealed them effectually from the gaze of prying eyes.

"Well, what is it?"

This was demanded with the utmost nonchalance. He often consulted her, encouraged thereto by her mother, on little matters connected with his house and domestic arrangements; and she thought that Mrs. Gray, his antediluvian and utterly useless housekeeper, who was a sort of institution at the Royal, and had been there upwards of sixty years, had made some fresh blunder, necessitating her help and assistance, for she was a clever little woman, and knew a great deal about potting and preserving, pastry-making, and butter-churning, and was just a wee bit proud of her knowledge.

"What is it?" she repeated, as he remained silent.

"I want to ask you a question," he returned, with evident effort.

"Yes."

"Do you like this neighbourhood?" he said next, rather vaguely.

"Very much," she replied, readily.

"Better than London?"

"Oh, yes, a great deal better. I would rather a thousand times be here than there!"

"And do you like Rock Mount?"

"Why, yes; you know I do." This with a glance of astonishment at him.

"Which do you think you would like best, to live here or at Drummond Royal?"

"Always?"

"Yes, always."

"At the Royal. This is a dear old place and I like it, but of course it won't compare with the Royal. The park and the deer there are lovely. Then the pheasants. I do love watching the silver pheasants plume themselves; and the rabbit warren, with all those

tiny bunnies, and their funny little bits of tails, and the conservatories. Oh! Keith, I could stay for a month in the orchid house!" and she laid her hand on his arm in her enthusiasm, and he immediately possessed himself of it.

"You can stay there for a year if you like, dear. I want you to come and live at the Royal—to make it your home."

"How kind!" she cried, with sparkling eyes, not understanding his meaning. "And dad and mother?"

"No, only you," he answered, watching her closely.

"But—but—how could—I—come alone?" she asked.

"Come as my wife," he whispered, passionately, his lips close to her ear, his hand clasping hers convulsively.

"Oh, Keith!"

One startled look she gave him, and then, as the red blood crept from brow to chin, and spread over the snowy neck, she turned her face away, and covered it with the disengaged hand. Childish, innocent as she was, she could not mistake the passion that glowed in his dark eyes, and made his firm voice tremble. Dawning womanhood sprang to life at his words, which lifted the veil and showed her what lay behind.

"Don't turn from me?" he implored. "Am I distasteful to you? Do you hate me?"

"No," she murmured, almost inaudibly.

"Then—don't you love me?"

"Yes—but—but—not—like that."

"How then?"

"As—as—a cousin—a brother."

"And couldn't you care for me in any other way?"

"I—I don't know."

"Will you try?"

"I couldn't leave mother and dad," she objected, desperately, casting about for an excuse in her shame and distress.

"Why not?"

"What would they say?"

"They wish it."

"Keith!"

"Yes. They know it will be for my happiness, they trust it may be so also for you. Annette, I am lonely; my house is empty and desolate. Will you not take pity on me, and bring the sunshine of your presence to the Royal. Give me something to live for, to hope for?"

He stopped and looked at her. She had turned her face towards him, and was listening to his impassioned pleading. She was temptingly near him. He had a mad desire to clasp the slender figure to his breast and kiss the sweet, trembling lips, but seeing that she shook with agitation he controlled himself by a violent effort.

"I will not press you," he went on, gently. "Take time and think over what I have said. Perhaps I have no right to hope for such happiness as would be mine if you became my wife."

Her lids drooped, and she flushed again at the words,—

"I love you better than anything else on earth. Still, if you feel that you cannot love me, and that you never could do so, I must bear it as I best can, and accept the inevitable. Don't let any thought of me influence you. Answer as you please, and do what you think will be best for your own welfare."

He released her hand as he ceased speaking, and murmuring some words about "telling mother" she fled up the path, and disappeared beneath the porchway.

Keith sat for some time in silence, watching the place where he had last seen her; then, with a heavy sigh, he rose, and walked slowly, with lagging steps, to his magnificent home. The dogs flew to meet him, baying their welcome; the gorgeous plumed peacock on the terrace waddled towards him; a great Persian cat, snow white from head to tail, rubbed itself against his knees, and a tame canary flew to meet him as he entered his room, and perched on his shoulder; an attentive servant brought

him afternoon tea, and the butler appeared with a whole armful of papers, freshly arrived from town, and deposited them on a table near him.

Altogether Keith Drummond ought to have been highly comfortable, and highly well satisfied with himself and his surroundings. Yet he was not. He sighed from time to time as his eyes wandered round the handsome room, replete with every luxury and comfort.

He caressed the massive head of his blood-hound, Duke, absently as it rested on his knee, and took no notice of Thyra, the tame bird, or Clytie, the cat, while he quite forgot the tea.

He was thinking of his wooing and its unsatisfactory result. She would not have him, he feared. She did not love him as he longed to be loved, and nothing extraneous would influence her. Her youth and timidity, though charming, were against him, he knew.

"I must live my life alone, I suppose," he said, with another sigh and another glance around the room, which somehow or other seemed emptier and less home-like than usual. "It is my fate to be disappointed. Duke, you won't have a mistress, and must put up with only a master. Come, old fellow," he added, a minute later, as though trying to cast aside the gloomy thoughts that held him, "we'll go for a stretch and dissipate the blues," and away he strode, followed by the hound, feeling that action was the only panacea for the pain at his heart.

Meanwhile Annette had seen her mother, who purposely met her in the hall, and with a meaning look drew her into the parlour, saying,—

"Well, love, you have seen Keith?"

"Yes, mother," was returned, in faltering tones.

"And what answer have you given him, my child?"

"Oh! mother, I told him I could not leave you and dad," burst out the girl, hysterically.

"Ah! poor Keith, and his home so lonely and desolate," murmured Mrs. Travers, in tones of deep commiseration, adding immediately, "there, dear, say no more about it now. Don't distress yourself," and she left her in peace for two days, but after that she led the conversation so that it flowed in such channels that Annette grew to pity her cousin, for whom she had a tender regard, and to feel that in giving him happiness she would secure her own.

Finally, before a week was over she would have been ready to marry him had he been old, ugly, and repulsive, instead of young, and handsome, and attractive, so artfully had her mother worked on her romantic feelings; and Keith one evening received a message from his aunt, which made him half mad with joy, and hasten with all his speed to Rock Mount, where Annette blushing laid her hand in his, and promised to be his wife, and let him take his first lover's kiss from her soft lips.

CHAPTER IV.

WILLIE was away when the betrothal of his sister was consummated, and returned when the engagement was a fortnight old. He was hardly inside the house when his mother told him the grand news.

"You are joking," he said, for to a youth like him a disparity of twenty years between husband and wife seemed an awful thing—a perfect lifetime.

"Indeed I am not," she answered, tartly. "Annette is going to be mistress of Drummond Royal, and Keith's wife!"

"Keith's wife! Why it's absurd. He is old enough to be her father."

"Young enough to be her husband, you mean."

"Surely the governor won't allow such a sacrifice."

"Sacrifice, indeed! What are you thinking about? One would imagine Keith was an old horror, instead of a manly gentleman that any woman might be proud to marry."

"Keith is well enough in himself. I know he is a rare good fellow; still he is too old for Annette," he persisted.

"Your father does not think so."

"And what does *she* think?"

"Ask her, and you will know."

He followed his mother's advice, and found the young girl anything save averse to the match. She was not madly in love with her cousin, yet she was evidently very fond of him, and now that she was getting accustomed to it regarded the marriage, which was to take place in six months, with complacency, while about Drummond there could be no doubt.

He looked younger, handsomer, better in every way, and Willie, seeing his joy and Annette's content, forebore to say one word that would cast a shadow on their happiness. He felt it would be useless and bootless, and just about that time an element of distraction entered his life.

Mrs. Murray's eldest daughter had been in delicate health, and she begged her sister to give her the benefit of a few weeks' country air. Mrs. Travers, at peace with herself and all the world, by reason of the successful results of her manoeuvring, readily acceded to this request, and Dora Murray arrived at Rock Mount.

She was a good-looking girl, in a showy, rather coarse style, evidently a tremendous flirt, and though only two years Annette's senior, was well versed in all the ways of the world.

She shocked her cousin sometimes, and astonished her; but, on the whole, they were very good friends. She struck up a great flirtation with Willie, who being in his salad days fancied himself deeply in love, and only gave him up when nobler prey, in the shape of a military friend of Keith's, appeared on the scene.

Rowand Leslie was a particularly handsome man. His eyes were of the bluest blue, his hair really golden, his moustache ditto, his features perfect, his figure superb. There ended the list of his perfections.

He was selfish, callous, unprincipled, reckless. A good enough companion for men, for he was a crack shot, played billiards well, rode gracefully, and could tell an amusing tale with point and piquancy; for women he was decidedly detrimental.

He had nothing beyond his pay save a mass of debts, could whisper soft nothings as though he really meant them, and was not as scrupulous as he might have been.

He had received a slight wound at Tel-el-Kebir, and made the most of it. Meeting Keith one day in town he told him the doctors had ordered country air, and that he couldn't afford to get it. Keith at once asked him down to the Royal, and the gallant captain availed himself of the invitation with alacrity. He and Miss Murray got on capitally. They had met in town, and renewed the acquaintance *con amore*. He would have much preferred a serious little affair with his friend's fiancée, but she was coy and shy. So he amused himself, for the time, with the dashing Dora.

"What would mamma say," she laughed one day, as she sat under a great cedar on the lawn at the Royal with Leslie, daintily playing with a plate of strawberries and cream, and watching the gay throng that Keith had bidden to his old house to celebrate his betrothal, "if she knew I have so much of you, and that sometimes we—we—actually—"

"Flirted," he put in, lazily, as she hesitated.

"Well, yes, flirted," she agreed, "indulged in tender—"

"Nothings," he interrupted again, at which interruption his fair companion did not look over well pleased, for though she would not have dreamt for an instant of bestowing her slender hand on such a penniless hero, and fully intended to marry the first old curmudgeon who proposed for her, always providing that his money-bags were heavy enough, still she

liked to imagine that this blue-eyed Adonis felt some of the pangs of love—meant a little, only a little, of the nonsense he whispered so softly, and really appreciated her showy good looks. His manner was careless and hardly flattering, and she frowned for an instant.

"Say speeches," she implored, the next moment, with a pretty gesture and a fascinating glance at him.

"I'll say anything you like," returned the captain, nonchalantly. He knew he might safely with Miss Murray, as he was well aware she was looking out for gold. "I'll tell you I adore you and the ground you tread on, but what would 'mamma' say?"

"That I wasn't to waste my time with detrimentials," she retorted, giving a Roland for his Oliver.

"And she would be right. What is the use of it?"

"There is no use in it. Wrong, but nice you know. Men with money are always nasty."

"Not always."

"Generally."

"And poor ones delightful, eh?"

"Just so," she agreed, coolly.

"I'll prove you wrong for once. Do you see that fine, sunburnt fellow talking to Drummond?"

"Yes," she assented, her eyes following him, and resting on a veritable son of Anak, with crisp, curly, chestnut hair, and honest grey eyes that harmonised well with his ruddy skin.

"Do you think him 'nasty'?"

"No, decidedly 'nice.'"

"Well, his income is five thousand a-year."

"Oh! how delightful!"

Her face was radiant.

"And he has a title."

"Better still. Who is he?"

"Sir Humphrey Dawson. Shall I introduce him?"

"Please."

Leslie quickly performed the ceremony, and feeling that two was company three none, he strolled over to where Annette sat, and commenced chatting to her.

Very lovely she looked, in a white, lace-trimmed gown, and a huge hat, loaded with snowy feathers, presents from her intended, given at Mrs. Travers's suggestion, and which formed a fitting frame for the delicate face and bright hair.

"Have you been enjoying yourself?" he inquired, in his most seductive tone.

"Very much," she replied, looking up, a quick blush mantling the soft cheek.

"Playing tennis?"

"Yes."

"Rather too warm for that, I think."

"A little, perhaps."

"A stroll in the woods would be more to my taste."

"And to mine," she said, brightly. "I think they are so lovely now—so dim, and cool, and green."

"This is the month in which they look their best, 'leafy time.'"

"Yes. The foliage soon turns once June is over."

"True, and I therefore think we ought to take advantage of the green beauty while it lasts. Do you think we might venture for a little stroll now? You know them so well, it would be doubly delightful to me to see them under your chaperonage. You could point out all the beautiful spots."

"Indeed I could. I know every inch of them."

"Do take me, then," he pleaded, "out of the glare of this pitiless sun, away from the incessant chatter of these magpies, into that cool retreat!"

For a moment the girl hesitated, and looked around for Keith, but he was nowhere to be seen. Intent on his duties as host—duties long strangers to him—he had disappeared among his throng of guests. There was no one to save Annette from the fascinations of Rowand Leslie, and his glance did seem to fascinate

her, much after the fashion in which a serpent does a dove.

She rose and accompanied him down the long, dim green aisles, where the rabbits ran fearlessly amid the bracken, and the coo of the pigeon was heard, and the "tap, tap," of the woodpecker, where the air was cool, and bore on its wings the scent of pine and wild flower, and the murmurous hum of busy insect life.

To the last day of her existence the girl never forgot that stroll through the leafy woods.

Her companion strove to exert himself, to dazzle, bewilder, to please, and he succeeded.

His burning, yet half-veiled, glances, the smooth, even flow of his melodious voice, his meaning speeches, all had an effect on her.

It showed her "what might have been" was she free. What fair possibilities there were in life for those who were young and unshackled, and beloved and beloved!

Keith adored her, but he was much older than this man, whose blue eyes spoke a language she had never looked for, and, therefore, never seen in the honest orbs of her future husband. Then the older man, though more true, noble, and honourable, was not so well versed in woman's ways, in silver-tongued flattery, in subtle wiles and fascinations, as the younger.

It might truly be said of Leslie that "His only books were women's looks." He thoroughly understood the fair sex and their little peculiarities and failings, and before he let Annette rejoin the throng of "maggies" he had gained a decided ascendancy over her, had conquered her coy shyness, and won her trust and admiration.

The next few weeks passed like a dream to her. She fought against the fatal fascination, and yet succumbed at the first glance from those azure eyes, which always wore such a tender look when they rested on her; and what wonder, for he loved her.

Victor Hugo says, "Love has no middle term; it either saves or destroys." And it was likely to destroy this man, who had never experienced the feeling before, in all his wild, reckless life.

In all his risky amours and many intrigues he had escaped heart-whole. It was left to an innocent, unsophisticated girl to win the affections of this dashing soldier.

He loved her as well as such a man can—and a bad man can love as well as a good one—sometimes more desperately and fiercely, for they know it is generally hopeless.

His was hopeless, and a dishonour to him, and yet he could not shake himself free from the spell her violet eyes cast over him.

He knew he wronged Keith by indulging his passion for his plighted wife, and in cool moments he hated himself, still he did not make the effort a strong man should have done to regain his own honour, and save the girl he worshipped. He was careful not to compromise her in public, not to frighten her in private. Had he spoken openly the bird would have flown away in alarm. He was careful and courteous, and no one guessed the mischief that was going on, least of all Keith. He was busy superintending the alterations at Drummond Royal—the refurnishing of a suite of rooms for Annette in a most sumptuous style and other matters—and did not notice the alteration in her manner and her bewilderment.

Willie was away. Mr. Travers never noticed anything; his wife, full of projects for the future, when she returned to that gay world for which she longed, and indulged once more in social triumphs and glories, had no thought to spare for the child who was to buy her these triumphs, and the only one who had a suspicion was Dora Murray. She selfishly good-natured, and naturally indifferent, made no remark at the defection of her cavalier. Besides, she owed him not a grudge, but a kindness. The horsey, doggie, breezy squire, Sir Humphrey Dawson, had proposed to her, wished to make her mistress of his vast dog-kennels and superb stables, and of his rickety,

broken-down house—for he thought much more of the housing of his horses and dogs than he did of the housing of himself—consequently, despite his five thousand a year, Dawson How was but a rattle-trap, dilapidated place. Still Dora did not mind that, so accepted him, knowing full well that she could alter and improve many things when she was his wedded wife, and secure of the five thousand.

So engaged, and engrossed over her own affairs, she troubled herself not at all about her cousin's, and did not speak that word of warning which might have opened Annette's eyes, and shown her the dangers that lay in her path—the rocks and shoals of which she was too innocent to know anything.

Miss Murray's creed, however, was the "live and let live" style, and being anything save innocent herself, and fancying everyone else as knowing as herself and as well acquainted with the ways of the world, she simply thought she was doing a kindness by holding her tongue, and resolutely pretending to be blind to those things which she foolishly fancied she was not by any means wanted to see.

CHAPTER V.

So matters went on through the long, balmy summer days. Keith fond, busy and blind, Leslie made happy in the present and reckless of the future, Annette in a trance like stupor of bewildered delight, from which it seemed nothing save a terribly rude shock would wake her.

It came at last. An old pensioner of Keith's was dying in a village some three miles off, and he, unable to go and see the poor soul himself, as he had to go to town, asked Annette to visit the invalid instead, and take a liberal money present. This his fiancée gladly agreed to do, and being tender-hearted, and pitying the poor sick creature whom she had known in her happier days, she put a bottle of wine, a jelly, and some fruit in a basket, and set out on her way through the woods, now more silent than in the earlier months, when the merry songsters were wooing and pairing, and were not burdened with family cares.

She had not gone far when she was joined by the Captain, who had been on the look-out for her, knowing the coast was clear, and his friend miles away on his road to London.

"Where are you going?" he questioned, when the first greetings were over.

"To Pantton."

"What are you going there for?"

"To see Mrs. Linton. The poor soul is dying."

"And those are dainties for her?" nodding at the basket.

"Yes."

"Let me carry it. It is too heavy for you."

"No, really, it is not weighty."

"You must let me have it," he rejoined authoritatively, taking the basket from her hand, while a lovely blush rose to her cheek as she met his glance, and his fingers for an instant closed over hers.

"Keith has gone, I suppose?" she asked, to break the silence that somehow was a little embarrassing.

"Yes. Started at nine, all eagerness to get back."

"To get back before he had started?"

"Yes, and were I in his place I should be just as eager, if not more so," he returned significantly, with a significance that brought the red blood mantling again to cheek and brow, caused her lids to droop, and kept her silent and coy.

He was more careful after that, and they reached Pantton, left the dainties and money for the sick woman, and were returning leisurely towards Rock Mount, when a vivid flash of lightning rent the heavens, followed by a terrific peal of thunder, and a perfect deluge of rain.

Leslie hurried his companion across the open

field they were traversing into the friendly shelter of the wood; but, to his surprise, when he stopped under the spreading branches of a gigantic chestnut to let her rest and regain breath, he found that she was trembling violently, her face ashy pale, her eyes widely distended, and full of fear. She had a horror of lightning. Brave in other respects, she was a perfect coward in a thunderstorm.

Once, when very young, she saw a man and his dog struck down and killed a few feet from her, and neither time nor any other thing could wipe out the memory of that dreadful sight, that mass of swollen, blackened flesh, that a few minutes before had been a breathing, living creature, full of health and strength.

"Are you frightened? Does a storm alarm you?" he asked, with great concern.

"Yes, yes," she murmured. "It is horrible!" as a burning flash, flamed from the sky, and lit up the dim recesses of the wood with its lurid glare. "It terrifies me," and she covered her eyes with her trembling hands.

"Put your face here," he whispered, drawing her close to him; and hardly knowing what she did in her terror, she buried her face on his breast, while he twined both arms round the slender, shivering form, as though to guard her from the fury of the storm; and thus they stood, while it howled and raged around, in all its awful grandeur, heart to heart, each tremor of her body sending a fierce pulse through his, thrilling him with rapture, making him lose self-control, forget honour, think of nothing save his mad, wild love for her, and the sweet possibility that she returned it.

"Look up, dearest!" he whispered after awhile, "look up, Annette, the storm has passed. Listen, the thunder is now quite distant."

Slowly she raised her head, and seeing none of the flashes she so dreaded, and hearing only distant mutterings, recovered a little, and tried to withdraw herself from his encircling arms, but he held her tight.

"Let me go, please," she murmured, her pale cheek flaming as she realised her situation for the first time.

"Let you go?" he repeated, reproachfully, gazing down into her face with a glow of passion in his eyes that struck her dumb, made her shrink from him.

"Annette, my own Annette," he whispered, his lips close to her ear. He might have spared her; weak, faint, trembling as she was, but the blood coursed and throbbled through his veins in a way which defied restraint. "My own, mine alone."

"No, no," she gasped with ashy lips, trying desperately to wrench herself from his embrace. "No, no, you must not say that. Think of Keith; I am Keith's promised wife."

"You do not love him," he returned almost sullenly, angry to find she could think of the man to whom she was pledged at such a moment.

"You must not say that," she moaned.

"I must," he went on, with fiery eagerness. "I have been dumb up to now, but now I must speak. The feelings of my heart overpower me. It has been stirred to the depths. Pity me, love me."

"Do not, do not speak like this," she implored, wildly. "I cannot, dare not break my word to Keith. I cannot fail him."

"Yet you fail me?"

"I was never bound to you."

"Would to Heaven you were," with a convulsive clasp of the arms that held her.

"Have mercy, let me go," she pleaded, in her terror and distress, for the look in his eyes frightened her.

"I will let you go if you give me one kiss."

"I dare not—have pity. Keith, think of him."

"I am no saint, only a man sorely tried," he implored; "spare me this moment, think only of me. He will have you all his life, I

shall be alone. Give me, then, the pledge I ask for, lay those sweet lips on mine."

"I cannot betray Keith," she murmured, faintly, "I cannot be disloyal."

"This minute is mine," he said passionately, "all the rest are his, it is no disloyalty. You are mine, not his, for this brief while; and as he stooped his head; she did not draw back. Perhaps she lacked the strength, perhaps the chill damp was stealing into her veins, checking the warm life-glow, and their lips met, his hot as fire, hers cold as ice. Then he unclasped his arms and she fell at his feet, crushed, and shame-stricken, and almost senseless.

His heart smote him, disreputable and dishonourable as he was, when he saw her lying there at his feet, helpless and forlorn, her white dress dragged with the dew of the long grasses, her hair loosened and disordered, her face like death itself. He sank on his knees beside her, and chafed the icy hands, begging her to forgive him, in most humble terms, beseeching her not to fear him. But she hardly heard him; a deadly faintness stole over her, for a little time she was unconscious. When her senses returned she looked up at him with eyes that were so heavy and sad, that he felt like a murderer; and such he was, in truth, for he had slain the happiness of her young life.

"Shall I take you home?" he queried, uneasily, flinching under the gaze of those mournful-violet orbs.

"Please."

She rose slowly, and heavily, and together in silence they wended their way towards her home. He left her when they reached the rustic bridge that spanned the Doil, with simply a hand pressure, and she went alone through the quaint, old garden, up to the house. She stumbled once or twice like a blind creature, without the support of his arm, and Mrs. Travers, who came to meet her in the porch, was frightened at the expression and pallor of her face.

"My darling child, were you out in that storm?" she cried, with effusive affection.

"Yes, mother."

"We hoped you were under cover. You were terrified of course?"

"Yes, mother," her stiff lips seemed unable to frame any other words.

"Poor darling, come in, we must take off those wet things at once, and it will be better for you to go to bed, and have a warm posset."

Passively Annette allowed herself to be undressed and put to bed, with equal passiveness she took everything offered to her. She was numbed, dazed, and glad that others attended to her wants. All the attentions, however, failed to avert the ill-consequences of the severe wetting.

A cold ensued, attended with very feverish symptoms, which necessitated her remaining in her room for over a week. Even when she was better she did not seem inclined to leave her own private bower, which Mrs. Travers looked upon as a very bad symptom, for Annette was seldom ill, and when she was never cared to lay up.

The truth was she dreaded to encounter either of her lovers. She feared Keith would know by intuition that she unwittingly had played him false, had let her heart be won from its allegiance to him, while, as for Leslie, she felt she could never meet the impassioned glance of his eyes again.

Their lips had met, and she was plighted to another, for weal or woe, for life, till death parted them. She felt shamed and overwhelmed. Her eyes were opened. She could never go back to the old, free, pleasant intercourse with Rowand.

Everything was changed since he had spoken, and she dared not, must not, see him again until she was safe, until she was Keith Drummond's wedded wife, his so securely that nothing could come between them, nothing part them—save death.

CHAPTER VI.

ANNETTE was firm in her determination to be faithful, in word and deed, to the man who was her promised husband. She saw him when she was convalescent, and answered his eager inquiries with her usual gentleness. If she was nervous and pale, and a shade colder in her manner, he did not notice it, or attributed it to her illness.

But as the days wore on he wondered at her continued listlessness, and her evident reluctance to come to the Royal. She invariably made an excuse when he asked her, and hardly ever left the garden of Rock Mount.

She had a good reason for this, though he did not know it. Rowand Leslie had been most particular in his inquiries during her indisposition, and had called several times since, but Annette never saw him.

Steadily she refused to come down when he was there, and avoided every place at which she was likely to meet him; and he at last, wearied by his fruitless attempts to see her, or struck by a sudden sense of his own baseness, left Drummond Royal, and returned to town.

When he was gone Annette breathed freer, and went about with a feeling of security to which she had long been a stranger, striving to take interest in the preparations for her marriage, which was to take place in September, and to forget that brief episode which had been so dangerously sweet, and yet so terribly bitter.

Though she conquered, to a certain extent, still she was not the same girl; and Willie, watching her with eyes that were not blinded by a lover's tenderness, saw the change, and wondered what caused it.

She was composed, apathetic, indifferent to all and everyone save Keith, and with him she was anxiously nervous to please. She sorely puzzled her brother.

All her child-like simplicity seemed to have vanished; she took keen pleasure in nothing; neither in the brilliant future that lay before her, nor the costly gifts heaped on her by friends and relatives.

She hardly glanced at the rich dresses prepared for her trousseau, at the delicate laces and dainty linens, and seemed totally uninterested when the route of the honeymoon was discussed.

Still she made no effort to escape the marriage, and was most solicitous to do whatever Keith wished.

He was so generous, noble, devoted, her heart reproached her for its *l'es-majesté*.

When she thought of all she was to him, how he had turned to her for all his pleasure and happiness for so many years, how his love for her had saved him from becoming a misanthrope, and, perhaps, a madman, giving him an interest in life, something to live for, she felt she could not do enough, that no sacrifice would be too great to make for him.

And so the sultry August days wore away, and September came on apace. The sickle was busy amid the golden grain, the harvest was being garnered, the vines were heavy with their load of luscious fruit, and the foliage was beginning to turn, to change from vivid green to bronze, yellow, and scarlet, the evenings were drawing in, the mornings getting chilly, huge clusters of blackberries appearing on the hedgetops, and amid the stubble rang the sharp ping of the rifle. Ruddy-garbed autumn had arrived, and brought with it Annette's wedding day.

Very lovely she looked as she stood beside Keith at the altar, her beautiful pale face enveloped in folds of costly Honiton, her long, snowy robes falling around in billowy waves.

Never more lovely, thought Rowand Leslie, as he stood and watched her with devouring eyes.

He had come down to the wedding, being bidden to it, with heaps of others, by the master of the Royal; and being too selfish a man to consider the bride's feelings in any way, and having a mad desire to see her again,

he stood amid the throng of guests, absorbed in his contemplation of her.

But she never looked at him, never lifted the heavy lids that veiled the violet orbs, so he was balked in part. Still, afterwards, at the breakfast, he lounged up, cool and nonchalant, and offered his congratulations and wishes for great happiness—wishes which were received with uplifted lids and apparent calmness—only the scorching blush that rose to her cheek, and which she could not control, and the trembling of the sweet lips told a tale which filled him with a fierce delight.

"Lucky girl you are!" said Dora Murray, as she helped to array the bride in a superb travelling gown of Worth's manufacture.

"Do you think so?" rejoined Mrs. Drummond, with a little sigh and a glance at her face, which was whiter than ever now that the blush had died away.

"Of course I do. Don't you think you are?"

"I suppose so," with another sigh.

"How lackadaisical you seem."

"Do I?"

"That you do. Perhaps you think you would have been luckier had you secured Adonis, with his blue eyes, and golden hair, and empty pockets."

"Hardly," returned Annette, with an assumption of coolness she was far from feeling, and then to turn the subject said, "This is the last time you will act as bridesmaid."

"Yes," returned Dora, with thinly-veiled glee.

"When is the happy event to come off?"

"The first of next month."

"We shall not be back by that time."

"No. I am so sorry about it."

"Never mind. I won't forget a present for you."

"Thanks."

"What would you like?"

"A set of cameos from Rome."

"Very well. I will get dogs or horses if I can, as they will please Sir Humphrey."

"Just so," and with a laugh the cousins passed down the great, wide oaken staircase, and Annette, entering the travelling carriage that was waiting was driven off with her husband, en route for the Continent.

"Wish I was in his place," muttered Leslie, casting an envious glance after the rapidly-disappearing carriage. "A lovely wife, a splendid estate, and ten thousand a year! Some fellows get everything, confound them, and others nothing," and digging his heel savagely into the gravel he went up, re-entered the house, and solaced himself with a soda-and-brandy and a game of billiards.

Keith took his young wife for a long tour abroad. Everything was new to her; and though he had seen all the show places of Europe many times, he saw fresh beauties in them when visited again with her.

The magnificent scenery of Interlaken was more magnificent, Lucerne fairer, the Rigi more stupendous, "pleasant Verona" pleasanter, romantic Venice more romantic, handsome Milan handsomer, beautiful Genoa lovelier, Naples more like home—far more interesting—Nuremberg, Frankfurt, and other quaint German cities quaint and queerer.

Everything assumed a new aspect. He forgot his own satiety of the scenes and places in describing them to her, and showing her the choicest bits; and she was interested and delighted, and forgot for a while her heart-troubles.

It was when they returned to Drummond Royal, when the excitement of travelling was over, and she had time to think, and Keith time to observe her closely, that both became more grave and serious.

She was always cheerful to him, always ready to do what he wished; never contradicted or crossed him; was docile and obedient—and yet, and yet there was something wanting, he felt. She was generally very pale, and sometimes, when he came upon her unobserved, he noticed a sadly, wistful expres-

sion in the violet eyes, that pained and perplexed him.

What was wrong? He had hoped so much from this marriage—hoped she would grow to love him passionately—and instead a something, something intangible, seemed to be growing up between them.

Noble and generous, he soon began to torture himself with doubts. Ought he, a man past his first youth, have married such a young creature? Was it possible she was realising that she had made a mistake now, when it was too late, and he could not release her? Was he distasteful to her? These thoughts tortured him, and soon showed plainly in his sad face and drooping lips.

Annette saw these signs, and strove to exert herself to please him and repay all his tender care and kindness; but the passionate love he craved for was not there, and he grew more dispirited day by day.

She urged him to amuse himself with field sports, hoping that would employ and divert him; and after Christmas, when the frost broke up, he hunted several days a week, and in hard and reckless riding found some relief for his vexed spirit.

One bright February day, when he returned from a day with the Doil hounds, he brought with him a friend, in whom Annette trembled to recognise Rowand Leslie.

"An old friend, Annette," said her husband, cheerily. "We must do our best to entertain him, for he has promised to make the Royal his home for some time."

The girl managed to murmur something; but her face was dyed in blushes, and the hand she was obliged to extend trembled in the Captain's like an aspen leaf.

He was perfectly cool, and uttered a few common-places nonchalantly, while she wondered how he dared come there—wondered at his audacity in coming under her husband's roof, and shrank from the prospect of meeting him daily.

This wore off after a time; for the Captain, finding he had a comfortable billet, and knowing the honesty and virtue of the girl he coveted, was circumspect and cautious, and only commonly attentive. Still her blushings and tremblings, and shy, downcast looks when he approached misled him somewhat, and were a sore trial and temptation to him.

He kept a tight hand over himself. Till one unlucky day, early in April, as he was returning from a walk, he came upon Mrs. Drummond sitting on a mass of rock on the shore, looking out seaward. The tears glistened in the violet eyes. There was a wistful yearning expression on the beautiful face, and her sudden start as he appeared, followed by blushes and shy tremblings, upset his caution altogether. He could not tell they were caused by shame at the thought of that kiss which had passed between them—that half admission of affection—and being blind and vain, as some men are, he plunged wildly into a confession of love.

"Annette," he said, catching her hand, "you grieve, still you do not grieve alone. Our fate is hard—so hard that it is almost unbearable. Shall we bear it without a struggle?"

"Must we meet as strangers?" he went on, hoarsely, as she remained silent, her eyes fixed on his face with a frightened expression in their soft depths. "Can we not be more?"

"More?" she echoed.

"Yes, more," he whispered, pressing her hand to his breast. "There can be no marriage without love. You are mine, not his. Mine really, his in the face of the world. Give me a sweet assurance, a crumb of hope?"

"Hope?" she echoed again, with a convulsive sob.

"Yes; hope that my martyrdom is at an end, that I may be all in all to you."

"Hush! hush!" she whispered. "If I listen to you how can I look my husband in the face? The man whose name I bear, who trusts me, I should be lost."

"Nay, I do not ask you to leave your home, only love me."

His voice sank, his lips approached her agitated face, his arm was stealing round her waist, when suddenly she drew back and stopped him with a gesture.

"Spare me your insults," she said, proudly.

"Insults!" he muttered, between his clenched teeth, while his cheeks grew dusky red.

"Yes, insults. Have I ever seemed to wish you to forget the respect due to your friend—Keith Drummond's wife?"

"Indirectly, you have."

"Indirectly! How?"

This was asked with an uplifting of the graceful head, an unconscious straightening of the slender throat.

"By the emotion you showed whenever I came into your presence. By blushes, and tremblings, and signs no man could mistake."

"And you took those innocent signs of shame—at—at—what once—passed between us—for—signs of a guilty passion?" she faltered.

"I thought you cared for me," [he acknowledged, sullenly.

"I was weak—once," she owned, with humility. "and I strove against it, strove—to do my duty by—the man who has given his name—and honour—into my keeping. Strove to forget—you."

"And—have you succeeded?" he asked, eagerly.

"You have helped me since you have been at Drummond Royal," she answered, with cold sadness. "Daily I have contrasted you with him."

"And found me wanting!" he said, savagely.

"Sadly. I saw how honest, true, and unselfish his love was—how base, mean, and cruel yours."

"You are severe, Mrs. Drummond," biting his lips fiercely.

"And do you not deserve it? Oh, Heaven! how low I must have fallen in your esteem before you could have dared to speak as you have to me. If you could only know the agony of shame I feel, the remorse to think for one instant I ever put you before my noble Keith, by my unwifely blushes laid myself open to your insults, the shame—the shame overwhelms me," and bursting into deep sobs she sank on the rocks with bowed head, clasping her hands over her eyes to shut out the glow and light of the spring day, the blue dancing waters, the golden sunbeams, the green, waving boughs, and cool, glistening sands. Silence—darkness, were what she craved for in her dire anguish.

Her faith in Leslie was broken, her childish trust betrayed.

She dug a grave and buried her love for him deep down, and she knew that it would never come to life again, that her faith, devotion, and passion were Keith's for evermore.

The wretched man standing before her, shame-stricken and shrinking, felt that he would give the rest of his life for one—only one—glance from her dear eyes, full of the old blind faith and trust.

Yet he knew that never again would the woman he loved gaze back into his eyes with affection or confidence.

He had seen the horror and loathing in her look ere she covered her face, and he felt that he would sooner have died than have lived to face her scorn and contempt. He had made a horrid mistake, which nothing could ever put right; had made her miserable, when in his vanity he thought he was making her happy.

When she could stifle her sobs, with ashen cheeks and trembling hands she rose, disdaining the offer of his arm; and in silence, with downcast head, she turned away, and walked slowly back by the surge-washed shore, he not daring to follow till long afterwards.

That night Mrs. Drummond did not appear at dinner, sending down an excuse by her

maid; and the next morning Captain Leslie told Keith that a letter just received called him to town on pressing and important business.

Keith was sorry to let him go, for he was sincerely attached to this "false friend," and more sorry, a few months later, when he heard that he had fallen at Kirbehan while storming the Koppie with the Black Watch, appeared through the heart by an Arab.

Annette was greatly distressed at the news of his death, for though she despised him she was too womanly and tender not to feel regret for his untimely end. Still, she soon forgot him, for her mind was full of other things.

Though she had striven to break down the barrier between herself and her husband she had failed. She knew not how. Leslie's impassioned words had opened her eyes, shown her how she had mistaken her own heart. What a glamour the fair-faced scoundrel managed to throw over his false actions and words, realised that it was her noble husband to whom her love was really given, whose affection she really longed for.

She was pale and sad when she thought of the great tenderness and attachment she jeopardised; and Keith, mistaking her sad looks, and thinking his presence an annoyance to her, and that his absence would be a relief, told her one day that he should go to Egypt.

"What for?" she asked, in amazement.

"To see the fighting, and, perhaps, join in," he rejoined, with unconscious coolness.

"No, no," she cried, running over to him, and clasping his arm with her hands, "you must not, shall not go to that dreadful place. You might be killed."

"Would you care much, little wife, if I were?" he queried, looking wistfully at the beautiful upturned face.

"So much," she replied, with quivering lips and tear-dimmed eyes, "that I should die too."

"Is it possible, then, that you really care for me?" he cried, joyfully.

"I love you with my whole heart and soul," she answered, with passionate fervour.

"Thank Heaven!" he murmured, gratefully, as he clasped her in his arms. "At last my own, old wife."

"Yours till death parts us," she whispered, fondly, laying her head on his breast.

[THE END.]

THE COLD CHILL UP THE BACK.

I AM not at all sure, says a popular writer, that we are any happier when we have quite got rid of that cold chill up the back which seems to accompany a dread of something white in the corner—when a ghost could not frighten us, because we would be sure it was an optical illusion or somebody in a sheet.

Those queer little tremours that make one desire to cover the head with a counterpane, or the pillow, for fear of seeing what you know must be only a white skirt hanging on a nail; that sudden haste in one's footsteps along dark halls; that expectation of a pull at your back hair—all these are so much a part of youth and the time of chocolate caramels, story books and a lack of responsibility as to where dinner is to come from, that it is really a loss from one's repertoire of feelings when we cannot be scared by a good ghost story.

Believing—just enough to be ashamed of—in lots of foolish things keeps the heart young; and it is part of the lingering of youth to want very much to have one's future told—just for fun. When that is over, so is love, and so are lovers. Then the expected young prince has become an old and despised king, whom one would not wish to see hobbling along to do his courting. The sailor, ever youthful, believes in mermaids and sea serpents. Gentle-hearted women, who are only old girls, have faith in omens and turning of tea cups, and the oldest people on earth are those stolid folk who refuse to believe in the existence of anything which cannot be seen and poked with a walking-stick.

A BLACK-EYED ROMP.

-10-

"Yes, I remember her very well," said Miss Nemourville—"a black-eyed romp, chasing the wild horses all over the farm, and pitching hay up, exactly as if she were a boy. Our third cousin, wasn't she—or fourth, or some such far-away kin? But what of her?"

"What of her?" snarled old Colonel Nemourville, "why, just this. Her folks are dead, and one of the officious Meadow Hill clergymen has written to us, asking us to adopt her. Just as if we hadn't enough to trouble us, with three daughters on hand already, and no earthly chance, that I can see, of their getting married" (this last venomous phrase accompanied by a gloomy contraction of the speaker's shaggy brows), "without assuming the charge of all creation into the bargain! Adopt her, indeed! Why, what claim has she on us, I'd like to know? The impudence of some people!"

"We couldn't possibly think of such a thing!" said Mrs. Nemourville, an elderly lady, with a good deal of powder sifted skillfully over her features, and a lace cap patterned after the latest French models. "Our income scarcely meets our expenses as things are at present. I do wonder at the assurance of those people out there!"

The Nemourville family had always kindly remembered their relationship to Mrs. Vassall when the vertical sunbeams of July and August made London life a burden to them; and their purse-strings, straitened by the ceaseless attempt to keep up a style far above their means, refused to admit of a trip to the seaside.

Mrs. Vassall had welcomed them with the sweet graciousness of that hospitality which comes from the heart.

Lassie, the "black-eyed romp," had shown Blanche, Vera and Editha Nemourville the nooks where the clearest springs bubbled out, the fields where the ripest blackberries grew, and the dells where feathery sprays of maiden-hair could be gathered by the double handful, and no pains were spared to make things pleasant for the city cousins during their somewhat prolonged visits.

But all this conveniently effaced itself from their memory now.

Adopt Lassie Vassall? Make themselves responsible for her board, and clothes, and lodging? Good heavens! What were people thinking of?

So Colonel Nemourville wrote back a polite refusal, fairly glittering with its icy conventionalities.

Lassie Vassall, sitting in her deep black robes, heard the good clergyman's wife read it twice over before she fairly comprehended its meaning.

"Don't they want me to go to them?" she asked, lifting the heavy black-fringed lids that were weighted down with tears.

"I'm afraid they don't, dear," said the clergyman's wife.

Lassie drew a deep sigh.

"Then I must try to find some way of earning my own living," said she. "You have all been so good to me, but it must come to an end sooner or later. Dear Mrs. Hall, won't you go and see the lady who wanted a nursery governess to travel with her little children to Scotland? I always liked children, and they fortunately don't require many accomplishments. I dread crossing the ocean a little, but I must try to leave off being a coward."

So the Nemourvilles heard nothing further of Lassie Vassall.

But the girl herself did not forget all this. "They might have been a little kind to me," she kept repeating to herself. "They might have been a little kind to me!"

The Nemourvilles meanwhile bravely kept up, although against wind and tide, the struggle for a satisfactory matrimonial settlement for Blanche, Vera and Editha.

They gave five-o'clock teas, purple dinners

and pink luncheons; they sent out cards for soirées; went to all the charity balls and chance parties to which they could obtain an entrée.

They smiled, and simpered, and danced, and promenaded with Spartan endurance; and still they remained the Misses Nemourville.

But when the waves of society were rippled by rumours of the advent of a live baronet to their neighbourhood, Blanche, Vera and Editha began to hope anew.

Miss Clitchett, one of their particular friends, had been introduced to Sir Reve Kennett at a ball, and she had promised to ask the Nemourville girls to a charade party where the baronet was to be present.

"Lady Kennett!" repeated each one of the three to herself, with an exultant leap of the heart. "Oh, I do wonder if he has an old castle with a drawbridge and a moat, and forty thousand pounds a year? And if he should take a fancy to me and marry me—stranger things have happened, and every one knows that aristocrats are special admirers of our special types of beauty—should I be presented to the Princess of Wales?"

Miss Nemourville ordered a new dress of white brocade.

Vera ordered Madame Petherique to make over her cherry satin with flounces of black Escorial lace and a train a full quarter of a yard long.

Editha, who enacted the juvenile rôle, ripped her one white muslin to pieces and remade it, with puffs and pleatings of Spanish blonde and occasional knots of the palest blue ribbon.

But they were doomed to the saddest disappointment. They went to the party. So did Sir Reve Kennett. But somehow they could not get near the reigning star.

"I'll never forgive Cornelia Clitchett!" said Miss Nemourville, as pale as her own brocade. "She hasn't taken any more notice of us than if we were those big china jars in the corner!"

"She meant a deliberate insult!" grasped Vera.

But they were wrong. It was only that poor Cornelia Clitchett had entirely forgotten all about them in the rush and crush and excitement of the evening.

"How handsome he is!" said Editha. "Oh, oh, why can't we get an introduction? Look, look! he's coming this way. Who is that lady on his arm—the tall lady in white, with the magnificent eyes and the necklace of pearls?"

"Don't you know?" said Mrs. De Saintin.

"It's Lady Kennett."

"Lady Kennett?"

"His wife," explained Mrs. De Saintin, graciously. "He is here on his wedding tour. Lady Kennett is charming. They are to give a ball at the Grand Hotel, in return for the hospitalities they have received here."

"Oh!" said the three Misses Nemourville, in concert.

"Haven't you been introduced?" asked Mrs. De Saintin. "No? Pray allow me the pleasure!"

And presently Sir Reve and Lady Kennett were bowing their acknowledgment of the profuse courtesies of the Misses Nemourville.

If the guests had been crowned monarchs, these damsels could not have been more obsequious.

Sir Reve was tall and strikingly handsome. Lady Kennett had fine eyes and a graceful figure, but was not otherwise remarkable.

"Nemourville!" she repeated. "Did you say Nemourville?"

"A pretty name, isn't it?" said Mrs. De Saintin.

"But it is not new to me," said Lady Kennett, smiling. "I have met these ladies before."

"I'm sure, your ladyship, I don't know how that could be," said Blanche, quite fluttered with the idea of addressing a lady of title.

"Oh, I declare, your ladyship!" giggled Vera.

"Your ladyship is making fun of us," said artless Editha.

"Oh! but I am quite certain of it," said Lady Kennett, in her slow, graceful way. "You," to the elder, "are Blanche, aren't you? And you are Vera? And this is Editha? Now, am I not right? Is it possible that you have forgotten me?"

The three Misses Nemourville would not for the world have suspected a baronet's bride of inaccuracy.

But they certainly viewed her with respectful incredulity and amazement.

"I am Lassie," said she—"Lassie Vassall, who used to pick blackberries and gather autumn leaves with you. I am your cousin three times removed!"

The three Misses Nemourville were straightway lifted from comparative insignificance to the top wave of popularity. As three elderly spinsters they had been rather drags in the market than otherwise. But as Lady Kennett's cousins the dawn of a new social existence was brightening over them.

"You darling!" cried Blanche, when she came to lunch at the Grand Hotel, the next day, with Sir Reve and Lady Kennett. "Now you must tell me, how did it all happen?"

"I don't know, I am sure," said Lassie, timidly. "I went to Scotland as a nursery-governess with a lady who was a friend of good Mrs. Hall's; and at Loch Lomond we met Sir Reve, and—and—"

"And I can tell the rest," said Sir Reve, laughingly, taking up the dropped chain of Lassie's words. "And Sir Reve fell in love with you, and he would give you no peace at all until you married him—eh, little girl?"

And as Lassie smiled shyly up at him, Blanche Nemourville could not but acknowledge to herself that this third cousin of hers had wonderful dark eyes.

"But for all that," she afterwards told Editha and Vera, "I can't see what there was in Lassie Vassall to attract such a man as Sir Reve Kennett. If it had been me, now, or either of you—"

"Yes," nodded the two other sisters, "if it had been either of us! But a mere country chit, a black-eyed romp, without a particle of style about her!"

And then they all three cried in chorus:
"It's quite unaccountable!" H. F.

A GREAT treasure-trove has turned up in the shape of the correspondence of Peter the Great, which amounts to eight-thousand letters and documents. Among them are the copy-books used by the future emperor when a child, and a letter written to his mother in 1688, from Pereyslav, and containing an account of rigging vessels, which were then being built on the lake of that name.

WEDDING CUSTOMS.—In Sweden the bride has her pocket filled with bread. It is supposed that every piece she gives to the poor on her way to church averts misfortune. In Norway the bride hands round some drinks, that all the company may drink long life to her; the wedding feast lasts some days, and the guests have no desire to let their moderation be known. In Liburnia it is the custom of the bride to retire from the table before the end of the dinner, and throw over the bridegroom's house a hard cake made of coarse flour; the higher she throws the happier she will be. In Circassia there are always set upon the carpet in one of the rooms in the bridegroom's house a vessel of wine and a plate of dough; and the first thing the bride does, on entering, is to kick over the wine and scatter the dough with her hands about the room. In some parts of Russia the bride and bridegroom, during the banquet which always takes place on the evening of the wedding day, are separated by a curtain. The parents of the couple exchange rings, and a basket of cheese and small loaves are blessed by the priest.

FACETIÆ.

SOUND ARSENER—A SHORE.

A GREAT HANDSHIP.—An iron steamer.

BEEF tongue and oxtail soup make both ends meet.

A MORALLY conducted family should have an "upright" piano.

PLAY-TONIC AFFECTION.—Going out between the acts at a theatre.

"Capital punishment!" as the boy said when the schoolmistress scented him with the girls.

A WELL-KNOWN tailor recently attempted to kill his wife, and subsequently committed suicide. This is evidently not a case of the survival of the "fittest."

A NINETEEN year old girl has just married her fourth husband. She intends living a married life until she dies, if the stock of husbands only holds out.

"Oh, where does beauty linger?" sings a poetess. Considerable of it usually lingers upon a young man's shoulder unless her head rests very quietly.

"Yes, Esmeralda, your ma was undoubtedly right. Iron is 'good' for the blood. For instance, observe what clear complexions the Chinese laundry men have!"

A TRAIN moving at the rate of thirty-five miles an hour will clear fifty feet in one second, or at the same rate of speed that some men accept an invitation to take a drink.

"What are you thinking about when you are not thinking about anything?" "In that case, I am thinking what answer to make to a man who does not ask me a question."

An Irish counsel, being questioned by a judge to know "for whom he was concerned," replied: "I am concerned, my lord, for the plaintiff; but I am employed by the defendant."

A WEALTHY man buying a large washtub, the seller asked: "Vell, mein frendt, you vill got your own vashin' done?" "Oh, no. This is for a foot tub for my daughter," was the truthful reply.

"Oh, you can laugh," exclaimed Fenderson, with a show of impatience; "but I'm not quite so much of a fool as you think I am." "Tell you the truth," said Fogg. "I didn't believe it could be possible."

THERE is such a thing as being smothered in honey. A man recently drew a big prize in a lottery, and the very same day his wife had twins—both boys—his mother-in-law was struck by lightning while on the way to pay him a visit, and a man who had owed him five pounds for ten years sent along the money.

MAGISTRATE: "It seems, prisoner, that you took fifteenpence from the prosecutor's till. Now, I put it to you seriously, was it worth your while to risk your character, your liberty, your whole future, for such a trifle?" "Certainly not, your worship; but I did not know there was so little in the till—I took all there was."

THE STINGIEST KIND OF A MAN.—"He's too blessed stingy to die." "Oh, pahaw! how do you make that out?" "He only keeps alive to save funeral expenses." "You're too hard on him altogether." "Well, you just offer to bury him at your own expense, and see if it don't kill him with joy."

WHY HE CALLED HER THE SUNSHINE OF HIS EXISTENCE.—"What is it that keeps you busy writing so late in your study every night?" asked a lady of her husband. "I am writing a history of my life." "I suppose you mention me in it?" "Oh, yes; I call you the sunshine of my existence." "Do I really throw so much sunshine into your daily life?" "I refer to you as the sunshine of my existence because you make it hot for me." A rise in the thermometer occurred immediately after the foregoing conversation.

AN umbrella with a pistol at the end of the handle has been invented. The old-fashioned umbrella "goes off" easy enough for us.

A LANCASHIRE man has stopped taking an agricultural paper. He wrote to the editor asking how to get rid of gnats. The answer came in the next issue of the paper, "Kill them!"

"No," said the blind man. "I do not repine. Indeed, I do not know but I am as well off as the man with eyesight. As near as I can discover, people care less about seeing than being seen."

"Can you tell the difference between an egg and a cabbage?" asked young Mr. Badger.

"I can," responded Mr. Ranter. "I have been on the stage ten years."

"Did you ever notice how a woman takes the cork out of a bottle?" asks an exchange. "No, sir. We let the women notice how we take the cork out of a bottle. No gentleman will stand idly by and let a woman struggle to get a cork out of a bottle. It takes her too long."

MRS. BROWN: "What do you think? Mrs. Godolphin has just returned from Paris with several thousand pounds' worth of bric-a-brac that she could have purchased just as cheap at home." Mr. White: "Yes, I know! she bought it at my shop yesterday afternoon."

INQUISITIVE Stranger: "By-the-way, who is that monkey-faced youth over there?" Smith: "That young gentleman, sir, is my son." Inquisitive Stranger: "The deuce he is! Come to look at him again, there is a remarkable resemblance between him and you. Strange I shouldn't have noticed it before!"

"That's the way every day!" angrily exclaimed a man, as he got in a bus with his wife. "What's that?" she inquired. "Why, the buses are always full about going-home time." "Just like the men," she replied, sweetly. And he grabbed a strap, stepped on an old woman's toes, and remained silent.

WHEN gaily the thermometer

At ninety holds its place,

And with your hat of straw you fan

Your mad perspiring face;

When every stitch of clothes you wear

Is sticking to your form,

How soothing 'tis to have a friend

Inform you "It is warm."

PONSONBY: "I tell you what it is, we work too hard. The constant drive and worry of business is making us a short-lived race." De Twirliger: "That's so. I never have a moment to myself. It's one constant round of work." Jones: "How did you like the game yesterday?" Both: "It was splendid."

MISS BETTY was a remarkably young and handsome-looking woman for her years, and she never told any one how old she was. "Gracious me, Miss Betty," said an old acquaintance, admiringly, one day, "how well you keep your age!" "Thanks," she replied, with a smile. "How do you ever manage to do it?" "Oh, easy enough; I never give it away."

Two men were quarrelling. One of them threatened to shoot the other. The threatened man, in revival of an old piece of sarcasm, asked: "Where do you bury all your dead?" Just then an excited man drew the satirist aside, and said: "My gracious! you ought not to talk that way!" "Which way?" "Ask that man where he buries his dead." "Why?" "Because he is a physician."

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PLAIN BUT NOT CONSPICUOUS.—Lawyer: "Did you see this tree near the roadside?" Witness: "Yes, sir, I saw it very plainly." Lawyer: "It was very conspicuous, then?" Witness: "Well, I can't say that, I saw the tree very plainly, though." Lawyer: "Well, now, I would like to know why, if it was plain, it wasn't conspicuous?" Answer that, sir, will you." "Well," replied the witness, "it is this. I come into this court and glance over the well. I see you plainly among the other lawyers, although you ain't a bit conspicuous."

"UNCLE JOHN," said Annabelle, "you must congratulate me; I am graduated." "H'm!" grunted Uncle John, "so is our old thermometer out in the barn, but what is it good for?"

He came in silently, and remarked, "Are you warm?" "Yes," was the empathic reply. "I might have known," he continued, "you lukewarm."

"No," said Miss Spinster, "I wouldn't have any fool of a man!" "And as you cannot get any other kind," remarked Aunt Susan, "you prefer to remain single. Well, I don't know as I blame you."

"No," remarked the man with the open countenance, "I don't like flies; I hate them. Why, what do you think? One of the insulting rascals just now flew into my mouth, pretending to think it was the window. That's a little more than even I can bear."

INDIGESTIBLE.—He (aesthetic, as they went down to supper): "Augh! d'you like etchings?" She (from the country): "Ye-es; but I don't think I'll take any to-night. It's rather late!"

"No," said the thoughtful man, "I am not greedy. Could I be permitted to buy up all the strawberries in the world at market rates and sell them at festival prices I should be content."

CALL a girl a chick, and she smiles; call a woman a hen, and she howls. Call a young woman a witch, and she is pleased; call an old woman a witch, and she is indignant. Call a girl a kitten, and she rather likes it; call a woman a cat, and she'll hate you. Queer sex!

"Mr son," said a father, gravely, handing the youth some money, "do you know why a sovereign is like a carrier-pigeon?" "Certainly, father!" replied the youth, pocketing the money. "It flies so fast after it is once broken."

"Pa," asked little Johnny, "do they always have an inquest when anybody dies?" Intelligent Parent: "Oh, no, my son! When a doctor has been attending a person there is no need of an inquest. It is only necessary where there is any doubt as to the cause of death."

"MAMMA," inquired Bobby, "do only good little boys go up to Heaven?" "Yes, dear." "And bad little boys to the bad place?" "Yes." "I'm a good little boy, ain't I?" "Sometimes, Bobby, and sometimes you are quite a bad little boy." Bobby considered for a moment, and said: "Then I s'pose I'll have to spend part of the time in one place, and part of the time in the other."

YOUNG MAN: "Your daughter has referred me to you, sir." OLD MAN: "All right; you have my consent. Is that all you want?" YOUNG MAN: "Well—er—one thing more I would like to ask, sir. If I should present your daughter with a diamond engagement ring, would you be willing to—er—give me a receipt for it, in case anything unpleasant should happen?"

"Yes, my boy," said a passenger, "I'm going home on an important errand. Don't mind telling you that I'm going to be married. You can imagine how good-natured and jolly I feel." "Yes, but don't you feel a little anxiety, a little trepidation about taking such an important step in life?" "Not a bit." "Have you ever been married before?" "No, but I've been in one fight with Arabs, two scrimmages with thieves, and went through four cyclones. I'm no chicken."

THEY slowly approached the house, he with a sad, dejected air, and she with a scornful look upon her young face. "I cannot imagine, my dear," he said, mournfully, as they gained the front door, "what has come over you so suddenly. I should at least know my offence. I simply asked if you were romantic, and—" A startled look came over the girl's face. "You asked me what?" she demanded. "I asked you if you were romantic, when—" "Forgive me, George!" she exclaimed, "I thought you asked me if I was rheumatic."

SOCIETY.

THE Crown Princess Stephanie of Austria has made several sketches of the palace and grounds of Laxenburg for her husband's important illustrated work, "Oesterreich in wort und bild" (Austria in word and picture). The Prince and his fellow-editors, unwilling to receive gratuitous contributions, have presented the Princess with a savings-bank book with a deposit entered in the name of the Princess's little daughter, Princess Elisabeth.

The young bride of Viscount Lymington has been laid up with typhoid fever at Hurstbourne park. She is now happily recovering gradually, but their return to Eggesford has had to be postponed for the present.

It is stated that the most valuable wedding present which Princess Beatrice received was a magnificent tea and coffee service of solid gold, each piece being richly chased, which was sent by the Empress Eugénie, in addition to the large diamond ornament already mentioned among other presents.

The marriage of Mr. H. G. Ricardo, Royal Horse Artillery, with Miss Ada Cobbold, was celebrated at Ipswich. The bride, who was dressed in white Ottoman silk, draped with Irish lace, was attended by six bridesmaids, who wore dresses of cream Cashmere with écar lace flounces, caught up with loops of dark blue and red (artillery colours) velvet ribbon, and had sailor hats to match. Each wore a gold bangle, the gift of the bridegroom, and carried a bouquet of red and yellow carnations.

THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES recently gave a ball at Marlborough House. There was an enormous number of people present, and dancing was almost impossible; indeed, it might fairly be called a mob. Among those present were the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, the Princess Louise, Marchioness of Lorne, and the Marquis of Lorne, Prince Albert Victor, Prince George, and Princess Louise of Wales, the Duke of Cambridge, Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg, Prince Alexander of Hesse and Princess Battenberg, the Prince of Bulgaria, Prince Francis Joseph of Battenberg, the Maharajah of Johore, the Count Erbach, and the Countess Erbach-Schoenberg.

LORD SIDNEY, who has several times been Lord Steward and Lord Chamberlain, and who attained his 80th birthday on the 9th August, was presented on that occasion with a valuable gift by members past and present of the Royal Household.

BADMINTON was *en fête* on the 6th and 7th August, when on the first date a military tournament took place in the Hunters' Close, Badminton Park, and on the second the annual exhibition of the Farmers' Club was held in the same place, both gatherings being a great success in every way. The Duke and Duchess of Beaufort, the Marchioness of Waterford, the Marquis of Worcester, the Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, and Lord and Lady Lonsdale, among a large and distinguished party staying at Badminton House each day, took much interest in the proceedings, and entered thoroughly into the spirit of the festivities.

The show of cattle was remarkably fine, and the prizes given by the Duke of Beaufort were valuable and deservedly awarded. The appearance of "Petronel," winner of the Two Thousand Guineas, who was trotted round for the country folk to see, came in for a large share of admiration.

The Duchess of Beaufort gave many prizes to the villagers for flowers, fruit, vegetables, &c. One of the most interesting of these was that awarded to school children for a nosegay of wild flowers, for which there was a large competition, the five recipients in this class receiving with the greatest delight sums ranging from 1s. to 5s.

STATISTICS.

BIRTHS, DEATHS, AND MARRIAGES.—The population of the United Kingdom in the middle of 1885 was estimated at 26,325,115 persons; that of England and Wales at 27,499,041, of Scotland at 3,907,736, and of Ireland at 4,918,338. In the United Kingdom the births of 285,612 children, and the deaths of 178,256 persons, were registered in the three months ending June 30. The natural increase of population was, therefore, 109,356. The registered number of persons married in the quarter ending 31st March, 1885, was 105,464. The birthrate in the United Kingdom in the second quarter of 1885 was 31.5 and the death-rate 19.5 per 1,000. The marriage-rate in the first quarter of this year was 11.8 per 1,000.

DIVORCE IN PARIS.—The latest number of the official statistical reports on the City of Paris tells us that during January the number of divorces pronounced by the Maires of the city was 20; in February the number rose to 47, and in March to 167. In all these cases except three there had been a previous judicial separation *à mensa et thoro*. In 157 cases the wife was the petitioner; in 74 it was the husband. As to position, in 105 cases the parties were manufacturers or engaged in trade; 20 were officials; 36 belonged to a liberal profession; 32 were working people; the rest are undescribed.

GEMS.

It is through madness that we hate an enemy, and think of revenge ourselves; and it is through indolence that we are appeased, and do not revenge ourselves.

ONE great reason why many children abandon themselves wholly to silly sports, and trifle away all their time insipidly, is because they have found their curiosity balked.

THE pleasures of the world are deceitful; they promise more than they give. They trouble us in seeking them, they do not satisfy us when possessing them, and they make us despair in losing them.

WE should do nothing inconsistent with the spirit and genius of our institutions. We should do nothing for revenge, but everything for security; nothing for the past, everything for the present and the future.

FRANKNESS and openness are the natural and healthful atmospheres of goodness and strength. Were all men perfect there would be no reserve, for there would be nothing to conceal. Each would be sure of sympathy and appreciation for himself, and be generous in bestowing them upon others.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BAKED SWEET POTATOES.—Potatoes, too small to bake, boil and mash smooth, and to one quart add cup of milk, one spoonful of butter; flavour with nutmeg slightly. Bake in a deep plate; serve hot.

MOCK OYSTER SOUP.—Put on one quart of fresh milk to boil, in another vessel put on one-half pint of stewed tomatoes with one pint of water; when it boils add one teaspoonful of soda to the tomatoes; as soon as the milk boils mix all together; stir well, and pour into the tureen which already has bread crumbs in it seasoned with butter, pepper, and salt.

LACTIC ACID is one of the chief agents that give acidity to the gastric juices of the stomach in health. This is the acid of sour milk, and therefore one of the best summer diet drinks that we can use is buttermilk. It satisfies the craving for acids by giving to the stomach a natural supply, and at the same time furnishing, in its cheesy matter, a good supply of wholesome nutrition. A man will endure fatigue in hot weather better on buttermilk than on any diet drink he can use.

MISCELLANEOUS.

FELLING THE GIANT TREES OF CALIFORNIA.—We stop beneath a monster tree, fully two hundred feet high and eight feet in diameter at the base, tapering gradually to a diameter of about three feet. Standing perfectly erect, leaning neither towards the top nor bottom of the steep hillside upon which it grows, this tree affords a fine example of the methods used in California in felling timber. The choppers first erect a scaffold around it that will elevate them to the height decided upon as most expedient, and which in this instance is seven feet from the ground.

As you value health, be careful not to sit or sleep in the draught from a furnace or plumber's pipe. A health society finds by experiment that currents of air in a room have directions and angles definite as those of billiards, and that speaking tubes, pipes and hoists are conductors of dangerous air from the lower regions of a house. An illness of the Duchess of Connaught was taken by making her usual seat on a sofa in heirloom, exposed to a draught of foul air from the basement, which would not reach her bed. The shrunken skirting of a wall may draw air between joists from the drains that will slowly poison persons sitting or sleeping near it. People begin to find out that sanitary laws are to be obeyed, and that dangers from neglect are not to be escaped for ever.

CHARM OF APPEARANCES.—It is often thought that the world has a profound respect for a fine appearance. It is precisely the same way with hens. A maddy-coloured little chicken got its leg hurt and went lame, and the whole flock of hens bore down on her and pecked and maltreated her. The poor thing led a horrible life, says a writer, till I caught her and painted her head with gold paint and made eyes like a peacock's with iridescent paint all down her sides and gilded her legs, and when she was quite dry I let her loose among her former persecutors. The effect was marvellous. That hen walked into the sun and she was something dazzling. The unpainted hens were dazed with admiration. She has received the unremitting attentions ever since of the four roosters belonging to my farm. Duels are fought daily on her account on my premises. What will happen when the gilding soaks off I can't say; but at present she is queen of the run.

A QUEEN'S HOBBIES.—Dancing was Queen Elizabeth's principal delight, and in that exercise, says Lingard, she displayed a grace and spirit which was universally admired. She retained, moreover, her partiality for it to the last, and few days passed in which the young nobility of the Court were not called to dance before their sovereign. The Queen herself, too, condescended to perform her part in a galliard with the Duke of Nevers at the age of sixty-nine. Stanhope, writing in the year 1589, says: "The Queen is so well as, I can assure you, six or seven galliards in a morning, beside music and singing, is her ordinary exercise." She seems, also, to have been very fond of needlework, and in the Bodleian Library is preserved a copy of the Epistles of St. Paul, the binding of which is said to have been embroidered by that queen when princess. Elizabeth, also, was exceedingly fond of the chase, often following the hounds herself, and the nobility who entertained her in her different progresses made up large hunting parties. "Her Majesty," says a courtier, writing to Sir Robert Sidney, "is well and excellently disposed to hunting, for every second day she is on horseback, and continues the sport long." At this time Elizabeth had just entered the seventy-seventh year of her age. Elizabeth's love of fine dresses was quite a passion. Marvellous costumes, covered with eyes and ears, to represent Omniscience, with birds and animals, flowers and fruits, and various allegorical devices, were constantly worn by her, and exhibited in triumph to her ambassadors.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. M. C.—It is perfectly proper and natural to dress your daughters alike. You should consult their tastes as far as possible.

F. T. H.—Differences of religious faith is not an insuperable obstacle to a happy marriage. You must arrange the matter for yourselves.

J. H.—You can prepare yourself for the study of the law by reading such books as Blackstone's *Commentaries*, and similar text books, but you would get far better instruction by entering a lawyer's office.

N. N. R.—You are too young to marry. You are a mere child. It would be a cruel wrong for this old man to marry you. Decline to marry. Tell your nearest relatives at once of this matter.

S. S. S.—The best and only course for a young lady, under such circumstances, is to drop the young man from the list of her acquaintances. It is foolish to do or say anything against him.

H. H.—Much depends on circumstances, but as a rule set great value on kisses and never cheapen them by making them common. If engaged or things have that tendency a discreet kiss at the door may be permitted.

W. S.—Your mother has already given you the best advice you can have on the subject. Should your coldness towards your betrothed so chill his own love that he would cease all demonstrations of affection, it might be a source of lasting regret to you.

C. F. A.—1. It is of frequent occurrence. 2. Write to the authorities of the town in which you were born. The record of births will be proof. 3. Only fair. You should endeavour to make your handwriting more legible.

G. S. S.—Glass is not porous. If a bottle of water were perfectly sealed the water would not evaporate. The moisture on the bottle accumulates from the air outside. Any substance which is colder than the surrounding atmosphere will gather moisture from the air.

S. S. M.—We cannot promise you success, but we think if you renew your attentions, and at the first suitable opportunity repeat your offer, that it will be received more favourably than at first. Many a successful lover has had to bear more than one refusal before being accepted.

M. G. G.—Call on the young ladies, as you have called heretofore. The report that they said they would not see you if you called is doubtless exaggerated, and may be a pure invention. By calling on them you can talk the whole matter over, and come to an intelligent understanding with one another.

L. D. D.—A few lessons from a practical riding teacher or by anyone familiar with equestrian exercises will help you. There are a number of excellent little books on the subject which you can consult. To tell you how to ride would take up too much space in this column. Practice alone will enable you to ride well.

F. G. G.—In your case the folly of a marriage at sixteen is fully illustrated. You evidently did not know your own mind and heart. We advise you to take the advice of your nearest relations; your parents, if living, will help you. We cannot advise you without a better knowledge of all the circumstances.

C. R. C.—A girl is not expected to inform a gentleman that she loves him. It is the part of the gentleman first to inform the young lady that he loves her and desires to marry her. Then she may admit her affection for him and tell him to see her parents. You are too young to marry, and in such affairs should consult your mother.

M. J. S.—Consult your parents' wishes. From what you say of your father it is evident that he is a generous and affectionate parent, and it would be inexcusable for you to deceive him in the matter. It is a most unfortunate thing for young people to rush into matrimony against the wishes of their parents.

L. T. R.—1. We can recommend nothing better for cleaning the teeth than pure castile soap, clear, soft water, and a moderately stiff brush. 2. Both looks are of a dark-brown colour. 3. No special rates are paid to authors for their productions, that matter depending entirely upon their literary worth and attractiveness.

B. S. H.—It is not at all likely that anything can be added to oil to render it fireproof, its greasy nature not allowing of such an alteration. Coal-oil is rendered partially incombustible by means of extremely careful rectification, but its gaseous nature is not entirely destroyed, no matter what may be done to it.

M. D. R.—Perhaps sickness has prevented the young man from answering your letter of inquiry. It would not be considered proper to write to him again. Your brother, if in the neighbourhood at any time, might make inquiries in regard to him and report accordingly; but it would not be right to ask him to act as a spy, in the manner you suggest.

N. D. W.—1. Get two ounces of fine white gum-arabic, pound it to a powder, put in a pitcher, and pour on it a pint or more of boiling water, according to the strength desired. Then cover it, and allow it to stand all night. In the morning pour it carefully from the dregs into a clean bottle, cork and keep for use. A tablespoonful of this gum-water, stirred into a pint of starch that has been made in the usual manner, will give a beautiful gloss to shirt-fronts, and a look of newness to lawns and similar materials.

C. H. S.—Telegraphic communication was established across the Atlantic Ocean in August, 1858. The first messages were those of congratulation between Queen Victoria and President Buchanan. The cable, however, worked only a few weeks, and then became silent. Eight years afterwards another cable was stretched across the ocean, and the communication proved perfect, and continued so.

L. V. D.—The steamship, *City of Boston*, sailed for her last voyage on January 23, 1870, and was never heard of after that time. Meteorologists say that two terrible storms met in just that part of the Atlantic, in which the steamer would have been likely to be at the time, and doubtless she foundered in mid-ocean, carrying all on board down with her.

L. E. R.—A common remedy for gapes in chickens is to introduce into the fowl's throat the end of a well-oiled feather, and to turn it round, so as to dislodge the worms which are the cause of the disease. In this way they are either brought out by the feather or coughed out by the bird. Another cure is to mix a small quantity of Epsom salts with the food.

L. S. R.—1. Superfluous hair cannot be entirely and effectually removed by means of depilatory powders, ointments, or in fact any like preparations. It is far better to allow it to grow than to run the risk of ruining the skin by using these compounds. 2. A lady with light hair and dark eyebrows and lashes would be considered quite pretty. 3. Light-brown hair.

F. H. T.—She is either a confirmed flirt or is weak-minded. In either case, it would be well for you to discontinue your visits, and leave the field open to her accepted lover. She has stated in very plain language that she cannot marry you, as she loves another—or at least thinks she does—and it therefore behoves you to assert your manhood and cease forcing your attentions upon her.

"NOT ALL REST."

We often sigh for rest,
For quiet and repose,
And long from tumult, care, and pain
The weary eyes to close.

And rest, when quiet comes,
The soul, that knoweth best,
Lifts up her wings in ad and appeal,
And crieth: "Not all rest."

"Not death while there is life:
Not soft repose within
When there is so much work to do,
So many souls to win!"

Rest cometh with the grave,
And soon enough we cease
Scattering our seeds along the way
To swell the Lord's increase.

Full soon enough we drop
Our sickles when we must,
Leaving, perhaps, our work undone,
As dust returns to dust.

Then rise, my soul, oh, rise!
In faded garments dressed,
And let thy cry throughout the world
Re-echo, "Not all rest!"

M. K.

A. M.—Salt of sorrel is the best remedy for ink stains. If the space is not too large take a tin cup with a top of sufficient size to cover the stain; fill it with clear boiling water; place the stained part on the top, dip it in, and then drawing it tightly over the top of the cup, rub in the salt with the tip of the finger while the fabric is wet and hot. Leave for half-an-hour, and then wash it out. If not thoroughly removed, repeat the operation. This is a powerful poison, but not so likely to injure the fabric as potassium.

J. M. M.—This matter has been somewhat discussed in Europe, and still more in India, but very little has been said about it in this country. The advocates of the scheme propose that if a person condemned to death shall consent to let medical experiments be tried upon him for the benefit of mankind, such conduct on his part shall exonerate him from the penalty of his crime, in case he survives the experiments. No action has been yet taken in the matter by any government.

L. D. W.—How can you hope your married life will be happy with a man whom you must begin by deceiving? You must certainly pretend to love your rich admirer if you accept him, while knowing that you like another man better. Some women make loveless marriages and are happy, but they are women who are incapable of loving anyone very much. On the other hand, many a woman who has married a comparative stranger, about whom she knows very little, thinks every day with bitter regrets of some rejected suitor whom she knew all her life, and whom she could have trusted implicitly.

D. R. D.—Skeleton leaves may be made by steeping leaves in rain-water, in an open vessel, exposed to the air and sun. Water must occasionally be added to compensate loss caused by evaporation. The leaves will putrefy, and then their membranes will begin to open. Then lay them on a clean white plate, filled with clean water, and with gentle touches take off the external membranes, separating them cautiously near the middle rib. When there is an opening toward the latter, the whole membrane separates easily. This process requires

a great deal of patience, as ample time must be given for the vegetable tissues to decay and separate. The process may be expedited by taking a tablespoonful of chloride of lime, in a liquid state, mixed with a quart of pure spring water. The leaves are to be soaked in this for about four hours, then taken out, and well washed in a large basin of water; after which they should be left to dry, with free exposure to light and air. Some of the larger species of forest leaves, or such as have strong ribs, require more than four hours.

P. H. S.—Write the following lines in Carrie's album and note the effect:

"Could metre serve to show us here
A woman to her circle dear,
Risen above the common kind,
Regal in beauty, grace, and mind,
I fear my pen could not then tell
Each charm the lady wears so well."

C. H. H.—1. Beautiful penmanship, as you doubtless know. 2. When a man has attained the age of twenty-five, and feels fully capable of affording proper support to a wife, he can, with all due propriety, marry; but before that time, he is hardly capable of thoroughly understanding the requirements of matrimony. At that age he has, as a general rule, attained his full growth, both bodily and mentally, and is better able to engage in the battle of life, and trample all obstacles under his feet.

R. W. R.—To improve your penmanship it will be necessary to devote at least two hours each day to diligent practice. If busily engaged in household duties, employ your leisure time in this manner, and before long a great improvement will be noticed. In the same way any branch of learning may be mastered, if the student systematizes the time at his command and determines that nothing but unforeseen difficulties will deter him from carrying out the plans he has established for his guidance.

C. M. X.—1. Continue the treatment prescribed by the physician, provided he is a reputable one, and in all probability he will alleviate, if not entirely cure, the trouble of which you complain. It is a disease requiring the most careful treatment by an experienced practitioner. Consequently do not place any dependence on the advertised remedies of quacks, who care more for diminishing the contents of your purse than effecting a cure. 2. As we know nothing about the person, it is an impossible matter to vouch for his reliability.

H. H. R.—A very simple, and one of the best powders, is composed of pulverized Peruvian bark, 1 oz.; pulverized orris root, 2 oz.; prepared chalk, 2 oz.; pulverized cinnamon, 2 drachms; oil of lemon or rose, 5 drops. This use with a soft cloth and a little pure castile soap (white), after which use a very soft brush, merely to brush away the debris. Some think that powdered chalk by itself would be almost as good, and much cheaper. No one is likely to rub the gums hard enough with the tooth-brush to do any harm.

H. G. G.—Washing the hair in dilute liquid ammonia would clean it thoroughly, and do some good, but ammonia should never be used for the purpose, because a mild soap will cleanse just as well, and the ammonia is so irritating to the skin that it sometimes causes trouble. The fact is that the hair does not fall out regularly, but by "fits and starts," and so those who are losing their hair are apt to think, for a time, that any remedy they happen to be using is effective. In this way nearly every nostrum gets an endorsement from someone.

H. H. W.—1. Any dealer in toys, and similar goods, will furnish you with scenery for private theatricals, or direct you to someone who can. 2. The following are some of the best formulas for coloured lights: Red: Chlorate of potash, 32 parts; nitrate of strontia, 48; calomel, 20; shellac, 12; Chertier's copper, 4; fine charcoal, 1. Green: Nitrate of carya, 80 parts; chlorate of potash, 33; sulphur, 24; calomel, 10; fine charcoal, 3; shellac, 2. Purple: Chlorate of potash, 23 parts; Chertier's copper, 28; calomel, 13; shellac, 3; stearine, 1. Blush white: Nitre, 4 parts; sulphur, 1; sulphide of antimony, 1. The powders are put into stout paper cartridges, about two inches long, into the bottom of which a little dry powdered clay is previously rammed. The manufacture of fireworks is too dangerous for the amateur to practice for amusement.

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